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THE CHILDREN

OF

OLD PARK'S TAVERN

A Story of the South Shore

BY

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NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1886

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THE CHILDREN OF OLD PARK'S TAVERN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW DOLLY ATTENDED THE CONVENTION.

"C'NVENTION? What's a c'nvention?"

"Oh, it's a lot o' men, 'n they meet and chew tobacco and scatter the votes all over the floor, till it looks *worse* than a pigsty, Thankful says, 'n then they come over here 'n eat 'n eat till they're fit to burst. But it's fun! I shall be glad when I'm old enough to go to c'nvention."

"Do women go?" asked Dolly.

"No, indeed! 'tisn't fit for women and girls," replied Ned, emphatically.

The two speakers were sitting in the veranda of the old tavern at Byfield. One would have known at once that the long, rambling, veranda-shaded house was a tavern because of the tall sign-post standing at its north-west corner. The sign was a huge gilt ball attached to an arrow-shaped

scroll of iron, and had it been an English inn it would doubtless have been called "The Orange and Arrow," and have had a story about it like the story of William Tell. As it was, there was no story at all, and it was known through the county simply as "Park's Tavern."

The stage-coach which ran between Boston and Plymouth stopped there daily, and it came dashing up to the door now, bringing the first comers to the "c'nvention." These came from Hingham, the remotest town in the county, and they would spend the night preceding and the night following the convention at the tavern. Railroads were unknown as yet, and almost everybody came to the convention, as they went everywhere else, in their own carriages. The coach was crowded inside and out. This was a Whig convention, and the stage-driver, who was a Whig, had tied red, white, and blue ribbons on the harnesses of his six horses, which gave to the turnout a gay and festive air.

"A fine day, an' a fine drive, gen'lemen," he said, as he tossed the reins to the hostler and clambered heavily down the steps of the stage-coach, for he was immensely fat.

Dolly had arrived by that same coach eight days before. It was her first visit to Cousin Ned at Byfield, and as her home was in Boston, and she had rarely been into the country except for short drives to Quincy and Cambridge, everything was new, and every experience fresh and delightful.

Well, the morning of the "c'nvention" came, and the household at Park's Tavern were astir early. Dolly heard the first twitter of the robins in the cherry-tree by her window and was wide awake in an instant, with her mind full of the "c'nvention." By the time she was dressed Ned had despatched the chores, which he did with such marvellous promptness that Thankful remarked, grimly, "'Twas a pity there wasn't a c'nvention every day in the year."

"Oh, come now, Thankful, you'll like it yourself next week — see 'f you don't! 'n won't you be spry!" replied Ned.

Thereat Thankful said she "hoped she knowed her duty," which meant that she should do her best, if '*twas* a Whig convention. For Thankful was a Democrat, and the next week the Democrats would hold their convention in the meeting-house at Byfield, and would dine at the tavern. As to the Whig coachman, she was barely civil when he came into the kitchen to bring a hamper of turkeys he had fetched from Boston, and she sniffed scornfully when Ned called her attention to the beribboned horses.

The breakfast was quickly eaten, and then the business of the day began. The cook-stove was taken out by four men from the inner kitchen and set up in the outer kitchen. A fire was made in the brick ovens in both kitchens, and when they were hot the coals were raked out with a long pole

with a crook at one end, the whole something like a shepherd's crook, and the ovens were filled, one with huge sirloins of beef and spare-ribs of pork, the other with loaves of rye and wheat bread and plummy pudding. The pies had been made previously—one hundred mince, apple, pumpkin, and cranberry pies—and were spread out on tables in the L chamber, imparting to the atmosphere thereof a deliciously spicy fragrance perfectly intoxicating to any properly constructed boy.

Perhaps you wonder why the cook-stove should have been taken out of the inner kitchen. So did Dolly.

"You wait and see," said Ned. "That's part of the fun."

There was a big fireplace in this kitchen, such as you sometimes see in pictures or in very old houses, big enough to roast an ox whole in. 'Zekle, assisted by Ned, who liked to have a finger in every pie, made a fire in this fireplace of hickory and oak, which roared up the chimney hilariously as if understanding that it, too, was a part of the fun. Then 'Zekle, still assisted by Ned and followed by Dolly, brought down from the attic six tin "kitchens," as they were called, which looked very much like tin caves, Dolly thought. These were arranged in a semicircle before the fireplace, with the mouth of the cave turned towards the fire. Within each cave, or tin kitchen, two fat turkeys, after being carefully stuffed and trussed, were spit-

ted, *i.e.*, the long iron spit which went through the tin kitchen from end to end was thrust through the turkeys, and on this rod they revolved and slowly roasted. Under instructions from Thankful, Dolly was permitted as a great privilege to assist in basting these turkeys. She was supplied with one of Thankful's blue-and-white check aprons, which enveloped her little figure from top to toe, and a long-handled iron spoon was put in her hand. Every few minutes she turned the spit of one of the tin kitchens, and dipping up the gravy from the bottom, allowed it to dribble slowly from the spoon over the crisp browning turkey. As there were six of the tin kitchens, this kept her busy, and her cheeks grew rosy, but oh it was delicious fun! and, "I say, Dolly," said Ned, "don't they smell prime! I do hope those greedy Whigs won't eat every bit, as they did last year. Such pigs! Nothing left but bones to suck. Going to c'nvention is awful hungry work, I guess."

From the six pots and kettles on the stove in the outer kitchen came a bubbling sound, a knocking as the onions and turnips bounced against the lids, and a fire was made under the huge iron wash-boiler in which the potatoes were to be cooked.

"I say, Dolly," put in Ned, tired at last of doing nothing but watch her at her basting, "let's go out and see 'em come; and bime-by, when the pudding-sauce is done, we'll have the kettle to scrape, you know."

But before going out they went up-stairs to view the tables which Thankful, assisted by a bouncing girl, the daughter of one of the neighbors, had already set. The dining-hall, for that day, was the dancing-hall proper. This was a long room running from side to side of the house, with many windows. It had a smooth, shiny floor of hard pine, like a skating-rink floor, though of course roller-skating had not then even been thought of. But Ned would have told you that it was "prime" for sliding, for he had tried it.

Two tables were set lengthwise of this room, tables made of boards upheld by cross-sticks and covered with snow-white cotton cloth. The dishes were of that deep, beautiful blue so rare to find nowadays, and which brings such a price when a bit is found; plates, tureens, platters, cups, all of the same color.

The pewter casters had been conscientiously polished by Thankful to the last degree of brilliancy, and were only rivalled by the glitter of the groups of glass tumblers. Down the centre of each table was a row of decanters filled with hard cider of a delicate amber color. The forks were two-pronged and of steel, and napkins seemed to have been looked upon as superfluous, for there were none on the table.

Before Ned and Dolly were fairly seated in their place of observation in the shade of the big cherry-tree, one or two carriages had arrived and the hos-

tlers were taking out the horses. The vehicles were of all sizes and shapes. A pretty sulky drawn by a white-eyed racker came swiftly and silently into the yard, and from it stepped a slight, brown-eyed man, to whom Ned shouted, "Halloo, Doctor!" Then came the delegation from the north part of the county, in a hay-cart furnished with seats, shaded by branches of oak and pine fastened to the stakes. This was followed by a half-dozen dilapidated carry-alls with flapping curtains, drawn by horses in every stage of meagreness.

A light barouche, drawn by a pair of beautiful black horses, now came into the yard. The driver was a negro, and as he alighted and opened the carriage door a tall man stepped out. He was *very* tall, his shoulders were very broad, and he was very dark. As he lifted his hat to Mrs. Park, who stood in the east door, he showed a head that looked like the State-house dome, so Dolly whispered to Ned. His eyes were black, deep set, and glowed like a smouldering fire, but a fire which may blaze out at any unexpected moment. He wore black trousers, a blue coat with brass buttons, and a buff waistcoat. He was a remarkable looking man, and it is not to be wondered at that Dolly and Ned viewed him with much curiosity.

"Who is he, anyway?" whispered Dolly.

"I don't know," replied Ned. "I never saw him before."

Faster and faster came the carriages, and the

crowd grew, and by little groups, and singly, they made their way over the Green to the meeting-house where the business of the convention was to be transacted.

"I shouldn't wonder if the pudding-sauce was done," remarked Ned. "S'pose we go and see."

"I'll get it," said Dolly; "you wait here;" and she flew to the kitchen, where she found Thankful just in the act of pouring the sirupy, nutmeggy sauce into the sauce-bowls. Now, Thankful, with all her grimness, and she could be very grim, had a soft spot in her heart for children, and for these two especially; and so, though she conscientiously held the brass kettle inverted till all had run out that could easily, she did not scrape it, as Dolly observed, but handed it to her, with the remark, "There, don't go 'n make yourselves sick now. There's enough to do, in all conscience, 'thout havin' sick child'en to take care of."

Dolly started down the flight of five stone steps leading from the kitchen to the well-yard, caught her foot, and fell headlong, with a dreadful ringing of the brass kettle as it bounded down in advance, and there stood two of the "c'nventioners" not three yards off! Dolly's face was crimson as she got up none the worse for her fall, though the brass kettle, as she picked it up, showed a bad dent in the side. She glanced furtively at the "c'nventioners" to see if they were smiling over her mishap. Bless 'em! they had neither seen nor heard

her, so deep were they in their political schemes. Dolly's respect for the "c'nventioners" increased.

"Politics must be very interesting," she said to Ned, as they scraped the kettle sociably together. "I wish women and girls went. Say, couldn't we just go over and peep and see what they are doing?"

"No, indeed, not you!" replied Ned, with his mouth full of sauce, greatly scandalized at the suggestion. "I might, 'cause I'm a boy, but 'twould never do for a girl, you know."

But Dolly did *not* know any such thing; and then and there an idea popped into her head which she did not share with Ned as usual.

The meeting-house clock struck twelve, which was the dinner-hour. The doors of the meeting-house opened, and the convention moved out in long procession over the Green to the tavern, but Dolly and Ned, being well screened by the lilacs, did not move, but sat and watched them as they passed in.

"There he is again," whispered Dolly, "the big man with the head like the State-house dome. Who can he be?"

"I'll ask Doctor Stone, he'll know; he knows everybody," said Ned. And he accosted the brown-eyed doctor as he passed by,

"Say, doctor, who's that big fellow with the blue coat and brass buttons?"

"That," replied the doctor, smiling down on the

two eager faces, "that is Daniel Webster. And look at him well, my boy, for some time you may be glad and proud to be able to say that you have even *seen* Daniel Webster."

The convention passed into the dining-hall and a rattling of dishes ensued. "Oh dear!" said Ned, with a deep sigh from the region of his empty stomach, "I s'pose they'll be at it two hours."

But just at that moment an unexpected call came from Thankful, who was standing in the kitchen door. "Come, child'en, an' git some dinner," she said.

And there, as they went in, on a corner of the kitchen-table which she had cleared, they espied as delicious a little dinner of turkey as two starving human creatures could ask for. The drumstick and neck and plenty of crisp skin for Ned, and two wings and a generous supply of "breast" for Dolly, with unlimited cranberry sauce and onions, together with the privilege of calling for as much pudding and pie as they liked.

"Oh, goody, what a spread!" cried Ned. "You're a dear old Thankful, that's what you are, Thankful!"

"Well, it did seem too bad for you child'en to wait till all them grown folks had got through. I never could see no sense in alwa's makin' child'en wait," rejoined Thankful, with a wisdom that young folks at least appreciate.

While they were eating their dinner Ned's father

came in. "Ned," said he, "as soon 's you've done dinner just take Bill and ride over to Torrey's Mills, and tell 'em to send me a couple o' bags of meal."

"And," added his mother, "you might as well take the gizzards along to Aunt Debby. It's on your way, and they'll like them for a stew."

"Oh, isn't that queer!" said Dolly, "stewed gizzards!"

"Horrid, ain't it?" rejoined Ned. "But they like 'em. Mother always sends 'em the gizzards when she has turkeys, and they always ask me to stay to dinner. But I don't accept, you bet! Say," he continued, "don't you want to ride over there with me?—it's only a mile, and old Bill can carry us both, and you can see the three old aunties. It's no end o' fun. They're awful jolly 'f they do eat gizzards. Aunt Patty's head goes so," shaking his curly pate in vain imitation of poor aunt Patty's palsy-stricken head.

But Dolly declined the tempting proposal, for, as elsewhere hinted, she was nursing a brilliant idea which Ned's absence would allow her to put into action.

So she bade him a cheerful "good-by," and after watching him well out of sight, with one sweeping glance to assure herself that no one was at door or window, she ran across the Green to the meeting-house door, and pausing just an instant to make sure again that no one saw her, she sprang through the open door, and, speeding like a fright-

ened fawn up the central aisle, she never stopped to take breath till she was safely inside the pulpit. This was not a modern pulpit, but an old-fashioned, roomy one, which could hold comfortably a party of a dozen people. The sides were high, so high that Dolly could just peep over. The overhanging sounding-board lent a cosey, shut-in feeling to the place which seemed pleasant to Dolly—wilful, inquisitive Dolly, who wanted to know what a "c'nvention" was like, and had taken this way to find out. She soon saw, however, that a more secure hiding-place was necessary, for any one chancing to go into the gallery could look directly down upon her.

Across the back of the pulpit was a broad, cushioned seat, down to and back of which fell the heavy damask window draperies. Here was the very place! and Dolly lay down upon the shabby velvet cushions and drew the heavy draperies about her.

By-and-by, after what seemed to her an interminable time, the convention began to straggle in. The president called the meeting to order and business was resumed. Dolly pulled aside the curtains a bit and looked out. She was relieved to find that the convention confined itself to the floor of the house and did not invade the galleries. She listened. Confused murmurs arose of which she could hear only an occasional word. Somebody made a long speech about free-trade and the

tariff, and the listeners cried "Hear! hear!" and stamped.

"It's stupid!" thought Dolly. "I thought c'nventions would be more interesting." And she had a rather mournful dissolving view of Ned riding on old Bill and carrying the basket of gizzards, and almost wished she had gone. Almost, not quite; for it was something to be at a "c'nvention," even if one had to hide behind a curtain, and it *was* stupid.

Soon a great clamor arose. Somebody had said something he oughtn't to, and somebody else shouted, "Mr. President, I rise to a point of order," and the clamor increased, and there was stamping and hissing, and the president brought down his gavel with a prodigious rap-rap, and then the clamor subsided and became a murmur again, which grew fainter and fainter till it ceased altogether; for, snug in her nest on the comfortable cushions, overcome with the fatigues of the long, exciting day, and heavy, too, with the amount of turkey and pudding she had eaten, Dolly fell fast asleep, and the convention had lost the ear of its hidden listener.

The convention finished its business and adjourned *sine die*. Those members who lived in the nearer towns ordered out their vehicles and drove rapidly off. Those from the more remote towns stayed to take supper, or "a bite," as Thankful phrased it, before starting. At last all who were

going had gone. The sexton, looking in and seeing the meeting-house apparently empty, locked the doors and went home. The sun set and the twilight faded. Ned coming home, and not seeing Dolly about, said to his mother, "Dolly's gone to bed, and I'm going too, for I'm awful tired." All the inmates of the tavern, among whom were the delegates from Hingham and Rochester, weary with the fatigues of the day, went off to bed at an unusually early hour, and the lights were put out. And still Dolly slept on heavily and peacefully upon the cushions of the old pulpit, shrouded in the damask draperies.

About midnight she awoke; she awoke suddenly. As she drew aside the curtain and saw the great space about her, the blindless windows of the old meeting-house staring at her like so many wide-open eyes, she thought at first it was a part of her dreams. Then it all came to her—how she must have fallen asleep — the people had all gone — it was night, and she was alone in the building!

Her first impulse was to cry out. But Dolly was a brave girl. She suppressed the cry before it had passed her lips. She thought, "I know it's awful to be alone here, but then I *am* alone. There's nobody to harm me. I must stay here till morning. I'll try to go to sleep if I can, again, and then I sha'n't know anything about it. It's really snug up here. But, oh, why didn't they miss me and find me?" Here she came very near crying, as she

thought of them all asleep in their beds over there, only the one little white bed in her own room empty. But she choked down the cry as she had done the scream, lay down again and drew the curtains more closely about her, and was just beginning to say over softly her evening prayer, when she heard a movement and a suppressed voice:

"D'ye hear that, Ben?"

"What?" said another voice.

"That noise."

"Rats!" rejoined the other. "These old barracks are always full of 'em."

I cannot repeat all the conversation to which Dolly listened from behind the curtains, trembling very much at first, but getting back her courage as she began to comprehend what they were talking about.

"Yes, a pile," one of them said. "Fifty cents a head for the dinner, and two hundred he got from the bank t'other day to pay Wright—it'll be the biggest haul we've made for many a day."

"Where's he keep it?"

"In his chist, clost by his bed."

"Spos'en he sh'd wake up?"

"I'll tend t' that," replied the other, significantly.

Yes, it was her dear, good uncle of whom they were talking, and this was a plot to rob him of his money, and worse, perhaps, should he wake.

"It's time, come along," said the voice which belonged to Ben, and they made their way from the

pews where they two had been sleeping to an open window in the rear of the meeting-house.

Dolly stood up carefully on the cushions, and, peeping out between the curtains, saw in the dim starlight, for the night was moonless, two burly men who climbed heavily out. She waited till their steps died away, then she ran noiselessly down the pulpit stairs, and cautiously through the aisles, lest she might hit an open pew-door and so shut it with a bang that would warn the thieves that they had left something besides rats behind them. She leaped lightly through the window and, going in an opposite direction from that taken by the men, crossed the road through a slight hollow north of the tavern, and so stole up to its rear through the garden, whose thick-growing quince-bushes and dwarf trees screened her from observation. She had made no plan of action—there had not been time to think much; it seemed to come to her, as she said afterwards, just what to do, and she only felt that it must be done quickly.

And now one of her accomplishments, of which she had sometimes felt a little ashamed, because it had won her the name of "tomboy"—the ability to climb lightly and swiftly—came into play. Thankful's wash-bench stood under the edge of the veranda, and springing upon this, with the help of the grape-vine she gained the veranda roof, ran lightly around the west and north sides of the house to the great cherry-tree that stood not far from her

uncle's bedroom window. Up, up its branches she flew like a squirrel, even to the very top, and she had barely reached it when the feet of the thieves were heard upon the gravelly way which led into the yard. They crept cautiously up to the window, their hands were upon it, when suddenly out from the cherry-tree, almost directly above their heads, there burst such a volume of happy, rollicking song, such trills and warblings as of a multitude of song-birds, accompanied with a soft swaying of the branches, that, terrified beyond measure, they stood for a moment motionless and then turned and fled. Dolly listened to their fast-fleeing steps till they died in the distance, and with them died her song.

At that instant Thankful's window went up, and Thankful's nightcapped head was thrust out. "Bless us and save us!" she ejaculated. "What *is* a-goin' on!"

"Oh, Thankful," cried a cheery voice out of the cherry-tree, and a white figure dropped upon the veranda roof. "I'm so glad it's you! Come and let me in."

"The little creetur is a-walkin' in her sleep," muttered Thankful as she pulled in her head. "She'll break her blessed neck!—unless it's a spook!" she added, under her breath; and to make sure it wasn't she looked into Dolly's room on her way down to the door. Sure enough, there was the little empty bed. No bonny bright head on

its pillow! No sweet confusion of dainty clothes scattered about the room!

She unfastened the front door, and meanwhile the other inmates of the tavern, including the delegates, having been awakened, they now presented themselves in every stage of undress. They all crowded around Dolly, offering explanations. "She's walking in her sleep," they reiterated, one after the other. "And it's a marcy she didn't break her neck a-singin' up in that cherry-tree," added Thankful.

"Oh, Thankful, I'm not asleep. Please don't say so," entreated Dolly.

Aunt Anna, who by this time had come out of her bedroom, put her arm about Dolly and drew her to her side. She was shivering from head to foot, and her eyes shone as the star we call Venus shines in the April twilight. Aunt Anna touched her cheek with hers. It was aflame with fever. "The child is sick," she said. "She's out of her head."

"Oh, don't talk so, please don't talk so!" said Dolly, bursting into a passion of tears and sobs, which, happily, came as a relief to the severe nervous tension which might really have ended in delirium.

"Well, dear, tell us what it does mean, if you wish," said Aunt Anna, gently, when Dolly's sobs had ceased.

And Dolly told her story. It was heard in si-

lence, only Thankful ejaculating, when Dolly reached the point when she first knew the thieves were in the meeting-house, "Dear little lamb! it's a marcy the wolves didn't get her!"

"And now come out, please," she added, "and you'll know it's all true, for they tramped right over auntie's 'none-so-pretties.'"

They went out, 'Zekle having fetched a lantern, and there in truth were the bright-faced flowers crushed and bruised under the footsteps of the thieves, and the pet of the flower-garden, a gorgeous root of tiger-lilies, was broken entirely off.

"And here's sunthin' else," said 'Zekle, picking up a huge pistol from out the "none-so-pretties." He pointed it upward and fired. "There! that'll let 'em know we're awake," he said.

Aunt Anna, who greatly feared the harmful effect of this adventure upon Dolly, undressed her herself, and after bathing her in the warm bath which Thankful had promptly prepared, sat by her till she fell asleep. She slept far into the morning, and Ned, who was the only one who had not wakened the night before, heard the whole story before she was out of her bedroom, and profound was his admiration for Dolly's "pluck."

"'Twas just like a girl to do that! You never know what a girl will do. Now I should 'a' just yelled."

"But why didn't you go straight to some door

or window, and pound, instead of climbing into a tree?" said he to Dolly herself.

"I think I thought of it," said Dolly, "but I couldn't be sure but the thieves had got there, and I wanted to get right round to uncle's window as still as I could, and, too, I knew I couldn't knock loud enough to wake anybody sound asleep, and besides — well, I don't know just how it was."

"But what made you think about the singing, Dolly? that was the very queerest of all," he asked.

"I don't know," replied Dolly, "unless 'twas the wolf story. You know, Ned, when the man was followed by wolves he climbed up on a roof, and because the roof was low, and he was afraid they might climb up too, if they were very hungry, he played to them on his violin to entertain them, and they sat round and listened till somebody came and scared them off. They were just charmed, you see, and p'raps I thought I could charm the thieves. At any rate I didn't think much about it — I just did it."

"What did you sing, anyway?" asked Ned.

"Oh, that was the queerest!" replied Dolly. "I couldn't think of anything but just this fairy song. Nurse Lely taught it to me," and she sprang up and went dancing up and down the hall (for they were in the dancing-hall, the tables having been removed) singing:

"Oh, dance, dance as the fairies dance,
The fairies dance, the fairies dance;
Oh, dance, dance as the fairies dance,
Trip-trip in the magic ring.

"Oh, sleep, sleep as the fairies sleep,
The fairies sleep, the fairies sleep;
Oh, sleep, sleep as the fairies sleep—
In the cowslip's bell they swing.

"Oh, fly, fly as the fairies fly,
The fairies fly, the fairies fly;
Oh, fly, fly as the fairies fly
On the black bat's dusky wing."

And as she danced to and fro, keeping time to the rhythm, and gently swaying like the cowslips' bells, and then flew up and down the hall with her arms beating the air like wings, Ned found it difficult to give full expression to his delight.

"Did you really do all that—the dancing and flying, I mean—up in the tree?"

"What I could; but I had to hold on with one hand, you know."

"Say, let me see you do it up there some time, will you?" Ned asked.

"P'raps so," Dolly replied.

"But I say," continued Ned, after a moment's reflection, "what cowards those fellows were, to be scared by a girl singing a fairy song in a tree!"

"Ah, Ned," said his mother, who was sorting pies in the L chamber which opened out of the hall, "sin is always cowardly. It is only righteousness that is brave."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MARSHES.

ABOUT ten days after the convention the following letter tumbled out of the mail-bag as it was shaken over the table within the tavern bar which served as the Byfield post-office, the letters and papers occupying the shelves whereon formerly wines and liquors had been kept. The letter was postmarked Boston, and directed to Mrs. Park. It was as follows:

"DEAR SISTER ANNA,—When we sent our Dolly to you for a brief visit, we little thought it might lengthen into months if not a year. We are going to Southern France, and I take it for granted, even before asking, that you will take care of her during our absence. As you know, my health has not been good for a long time, and Dr. Bowditch insists upon a year in that climate, and so strenuously that Malcolm has taken fright and has already engaged our passage in the packet sailing on Saturday next. So there is not time even for the briefest visit to Dolly; and perhaps it is for the best, after all. Comfort her, my dear sister, with

motherly comfort, as you know so well how to do. Expect a passionate outbreak at first. Poor child! it will be hard for her, as it is for us. In a couple of days you may expect her trunks.

"I need not assure you again how great a comfort it will be for us, when the wide Atlantic is between, that she is with you and Harry. Love to him and to your manly little Ned. Excuse the brevity of this, for time presses.

"I enclose a letter for Dolly.

"Your affectionate sister,

"HELEN WINSLOW.

"P. S.—I forgot to say that if we remain over the summer we shall most probably send for Dolly to come over with the Grays, who sail the last of May."

Having read her letter, Mrs. Park went in search of Dolly, whom she found with Ned in the kitchen, superintending the preparations for the annual salt-haying. Countless loaves of bread, bushels of doughnuts, a boiled ham, and chunks of pink saltpetred beef, were being packed into boxes and baskets.

"Oh, Ned, I wish we could go!" Dolly was saying, just as Mrs. Park entered. Catching sight of the letter, she came eagerly forward. "Is it from papa?" she asked, "and is he coming?"

"It is a letter for you, my dear," was the reply. Dolly tore it open impetuously and devoured the

contents with a glance. Then, with a passionate cry, she threw it upon the floor and ran out of the room.

"What's the matter, mother?" asked Uncle Harry, who was in the kitchen, fitting a scythe to its snath.

"Malcolm and Helen sail on Saturday for Europe," was the reply. "It's a sudden plan, and there's no time to see Dolly. Helen hinted at an outburst. Poor child! it's hard for her, and I wish we could do something to divert her mind for a time."

"Take her salt-hayin'," suggested Thankful, who was trying to coax a big cheese into a bag much too small for it. "She was jest a-wishin' she c'd go. That would divart her if anything can."

"So it would! I wish we might manage it," said Mrs. Park, looking doubtfully at her husband.

"Nothing easier," replied Mr. Park, after a pause, during which he had been critically surveying his snath with one eye, while he considered the question of salt-haying as a diversion for Dolly. "I guess we can manage it. A change 'll do you good; an' there's the old Marchant House close to the marsh" (he pronounced it "ma'sh"), "and if we take a few fixings it'll be tolerably comfortable. Thankful will send things cooked, as she always does, and we can depend on Skipper Joe for extras."

So it was arranged, and then Mrs. Park said,

"Now I'll go and find Dolly, or perhaps, Ned, you had better go. Tell her about the salt-haying, and comfort her as well as you can."

Ned, nothing loath, and feeling great confidence in his powers as comforter, especially when backed by anything so alluring as a stay by the salt marsh, after some search found her on the shady side of the great hay-rick. She had cried out her grief and was lying on the ground, with eyes shut, so at first he thought she was asleep. But as he drew near she opened her eyes.

"Oh, Dolly, I'm no end sorry!" Ned hastened to say. "But father says we can go salt-haying, and mother's going, an' it'll be bully! There!" he added, penitently, "I promised mother I'd never say that word again. A feller must say something or burst. But I've promised, you know. Just stop me, will you, Dolly, when you see it coming? And I say, wouldn't it be first-rate 'f we could ride down in the hay-cart? But I s'pose we shall have to go in the carry-all. But I'll drive, anyhow; father 'll let me; an' you shall sit on the front seat, Dolly." And Ned paused, feeling that he had presented a succession of joys enough to brighten the most hopeless grief.

"Oh, I shall like that!" said Dolly. "And now," looking a little ashamed, "I'll go and get my letter. I wonder what Aunt Anna 'll think of me, throwing it down in that fashion! Mamma is used to my rages."

"Oh, she won't mind," said Ned. "She's used t' me. Mothers don't mind, you know. I guess they're all a good deal alike, anyway. And I think you're first-rate, Dolly. I always hated t' have girls 'round before; but I like you. You ain't afraid of anything — don't squeal when you see a snake or a spider; and I don't b'lieve you'd mind being tipped over in a boat an' getting all mud."

"Oh no," said Dolly, brightening more and more under these healing ministrations, "I should like that—I *know* I should like that! Papa says I'm just like him when he was a boy. I just revel in dirt."

They went back to the house, and Dolly picked up her letter, while Thankful drew a flaky apple turnover from the oven.

"Here's somethin' you'll like, I know," she said, offering it to Dolly on the wooden shovel with which she had taken it from the hot brick floor of the oven. Thankful had great faith in the efficacy of "good victuals" for the healing of ordinary wounds of the spirit.

Then Dolly found Aunt Anna, and apologized for her rage; and Aunt Anna took her into her motherly arms, and they had a comfortable talk.

"When I was a little girl, Aunt Anna," said Dolly, "I used to fly into such rages! When I was a baby, mamma says, just a two-year-old baby, I used to throw myself down straight and stiff, and knock my curly head hard on the floor, when I was

mad. Wasn't it funny? I don't do that now, of course, and I thought I was getting the better of it;" and she looked somewhat doubtfully at Aunt Anna.

"Well, I'm sure you have every reason to be encouraged," said Aunt Anna, cheerfully. "Throwing down your letter was a decided advance upon throwing yourself down and knocking your head against the floor;" and she laughed, and Dolly with her. "Well, well, Dolly, we all have our battles to fight, and here's one motto I have found of great use—'There's no lock but Patience has the key.'"

The old Marchant House stood close by the marshes, not another house within a mile in any direction, although by climbing up to the top of a range of grass-grown hills hard by you might see the spires of Dukesborough far away to the south-east. The house was a weather-beaten structure of one story, spreading itself generously over the ground, and in it lived, the year round, an old sailor known as Skipper Joe.

Skipper Joe was his own house-keeper and cook. In this latter capacity he had served on board ship at different times, and could make capital slapjacks and duff, with other delicacies known to sailors. Every year his house was opened to the hands who came salt-haying, and he fried their fish, compounded relishing chowders, and made their coffee, for which he had a delicious and secret recipe learned from a French cook.

He had once been to the Banks of Newfound-

land in command of a fishing schooner, and had thus won his title of skipper. Like all old sailors, he had a fund of stories literally true, although to landsmen they sounded like romances, which he, sailor-like, was fond of telling to any chance listener. After his long and lonely winter, varied only by an occasional trip to Dukesborough, the coming of summer, which brought not only the salt-haymakers but, later on, the sportsmen for game and fish, was thrice welcome. To all these his old time-gray house opened wide its doors, and not infrequently every cranny was filled.

On the evening of the day upon which the salt-haying party from Park's tavern arrived, he might have been seen sitting in one corner of the ample fireplace, in which a wood fire, rendered desirable by the chilly neighborhood of the sea, burned cheerfully, lighting up the dingy wainscoted old kitchen till it glowed like the heart of a damask rose.

In the opposite corner, in an old arm-chair that comfortably held the two, sat Dolly and Ned, listening in open-eyed wonder as Skipper Joe poured out a ceaseless tide of story a deal more fascinating than the "Arabian Nights," and only to be equalled by the thrilling narrative of "Robinson Crusoe," to which it bore a certain resemblance.

"It was in th' autumn of 18—," he was saying, "'n I'd jest shipped on th' *Chandler Price*, Cap'n John R. Pease, bound on a whalin' v'y'ge. We

sailed out o' Edgartown harbor with a fair wind, that kept astern of us till we run slap inter th' Doldrums, where th' *Chandler Price* wallered for ten days, more or less, pitch a-stewin' out o' her at ev'ry seam, sea like blue ile, an' th' whole air as thick an' steamy as Nancy Blake's kitchen on a washin'-day.

"Wa'al, tiresome 'nough 'twas haulin' 'n bracin', 'n tryin' t' ketch ev'ry little han'ful o' wind, th' sun a-blazin' down 'n makin' th' men sweat like porpuses, 'n th' rails 'n yards squirmin', as 'twere, in th' heat. As I said, this kep' up for ten days, more or less, 'n we lay t' th' nor'ards o' th' Line, waitin' 'n waitin', 'n one day pooty much like another, 'n th' Southern Cross a-hangin' jest above th' h'rizon at night. Ah!"—and Skipper Joe took his pipe out of his mouth, with a nod to Dolly, whose hazel eyes had darkened and brightened as she listened to his sailor-talk—"them stars beat your eyes, my little lass. It makes a man feel kind o' queer, a sailor-lad who b'lieves 'n them things, t' see that cross a-hangin' ther' night a'ter night.

"'N the sharks kep' round, jest as the pesky critters will, hopin', I reckon, that we'd rot a hole 'n th' bottom o' th' *Chandler Price* 'n drop through inter their jaws. But they were destined t' disapp'intment, for all 't once come a bust o' wind from the nor'-east that sent us spinnin', all sails set, with a screechin' wind astern, straight f' th' whalin'-grounds. Wa'al, we were destined t' disapp'int-

ment tew, 'n 'twas many a long day before we set eyes on them whalin'-grounds, an' this was how 'twas."

Here Skipper Joe paused to empty the ashes from his pipe and to refill it, settling back at last into his roundabout chair with the air of a man who has a congenial piece of work to do and means to do it.

He was a short, fat man, with a face round and jolly as the full moon, which was completely encircled with a growth of gray, stubbly beard and hair like a halo. He looked around upon his audience beamingly. Several of the men, to whom his stories were as familiar as their A B C's, and to one or two of them perhaps more so, were nodding and snoring outright. The remainder, to whom, as to Dolly and Ned, they had the charm of freshness, were waiting patiently for him to take up the thread of his narrative, having meanwhile made use of the break to refill their pipes also.

"Wa'al, as I was a-sayin', we were destined t' dis-app'intment," he resumed, repeating the sonorous phrase with evident relish. "For one mornin', what did th' man at th' lookout spy but a piece o' spar driftin', 'n another 'n another, an' planks 'n ropes 'n casks, 'n then we knew ther' must 'a be'n a wreck, tho' ther' wa'n't nothin' put down nowheres on the chart round about there f'r anybody t' get wrecked on. An' so we began cruisin' f'r land, f'r Cap'n Pease wa'n't th' man t' leave

a perishin' feller-critter, t' say nothin' 'bout a feller-seaman, 'n we cruised 'n cruised f'r six day 'thout seein' signs o' land, only this drift which stuck close t' th' *Chandler Price* with a kind o' feller-feelin' as 'twere.

"Wa'al, by that time the crew nat'rally began t' get uneasy thinkin' o' th' time lost an' their wage, an' so th' cap'n finally said, C'lumbus-like, 'f land wa'n't sighted *that* day he'd give it up 'n steer f'r th' whalin'-ground. Wa'al, 'twa'n't sighted, 'n that night th' *Chandler Price* was headed ag'in for th' whalin'-ground, 'n th' cap'n he went off t' his bunk ruther down 'n th' mouth; an' now, mates," and here Skipper Joe took his pipe from his mouth, and, laying it on the jamb of the fireplace, looked solemnly from one to another, "comes th' queerest part o' my yarn. Cap'n Pease was a prayin' man—he *b'lieved* in prayer; an' long a'ter this he told a friend o' hisn that a'ter he'd turned in he couldn't sleep f'r thinkin' o' them poor shipwrecked critters, an' so he jest prayed t' th' Lord that 'f they were alive he'd jest d'rect him which way t' steer, 'n he did; f'r somewhere out o' th' night 'n th' dark there come a voice sayin', 'Steer sou'-by-west,' 'n the cap'n, 'bedient like Paul t' th' heavenly vision, jumped out o' his bunk 'n rushed on deck, 'thout stoppin' t' put on his clothes, 'n shouted t' th' man at th' wheel, 'Head her sou'-by-west!' 'n th' steersman he said nothin', but jest kind o' stared 't th' old man, thinkin' he was crazy-

like, 'n walkin' 'n his sleep; 'n then th' cap'n he jest shouts ag'in, 'Head her sou'-by-west,' 'n then he down with th' helm 'n steered sou'-by-west, 'n next mornin' at break o' day I'm jiggered 'f ther' wa'n't land a-lyin' sou'-by-west, as pooty a little coral island 's y' ever see, covered with cocoa-nut trees, 'n a white shirt a-flyin' from th' tallest one—leastways we l'arned 'twas a white shirt a'terwards, tho' 't looked 's much like a white swab 's anything then.

"The cap'n, a-smilin' kind o' ser'ous, thinkin' 'bout the voice I reckon, looked thro' his glass 'n see a boy runnin' 'long th' beach t' th' other side o' th' island, 'n pooty soon he come ag'in with a dozen 'n more white men, all a-shoutin' 'n wavin' their hands, 'n d'rectin' us 'round th' other side o' th' island, where ther' was an openin' 'n th' reef. 'N, mates, I've seen men 'n all succumstances o' grief 'n joy, but I never see men so crazy with joy 's them men. They laughed 'n they hugged us when we come ashore, 'n they cried like babies. 'N no wonder, when y' come t' think on't, f'r th' island was swarmin' with savages, 'n they'd divided th' men round, each fam'ly takin' care o' so many, 'n fed 'em on raw fish 'n cocoa-nuts. But th' cocoa-nuts was givin' out 'n pervisions gittin' scurse, 'n so th' savage critters had drawn lots 'mong 'em two 'r three times t' see which they'd kill. But ev'ry time the women—'n women, mates, 're jest alike th' world over, alw'ys pitiful—th' women had throwed themselves between th' savages 'n th'

men, 'n begged f'r their lives, 'n so they'd spared 'em. But the very next day a part o' 'em *were* t' be killed anyhow, f'r the savages said they couldn't stand it any longer; so we was jest 'n th' nick o' time, 's 'twere.

"Wa'al, th' savage critters took advantage o' our necess'ties, 's civ'lized men will sometimes, 'n made the cap'n pay a good round sum f'r th' poor fellers. It took all the cap'n's tradin' stuff, tobacker 'n sech, 'n a good part o' the ship stores, t' ransom 'em, 'n then we steered straight f'r th' S'ciety Islands, f'r th' cap'n thought he'd find vessels there short o' hands, 'n then he could divide th' poor fellers among 'em, 'n so give us more sea-room aboard the *Chandler Price;* but 'twa'n't t' be, 'n we kep' most o' them t' th' end o' th' v'y'ge. That resc'e cost Cap'n Pease two thousand dollars out o' his own pocket, 'n he never got a red cent of it back. But I reckon, mates, that when a man sets sail f'r his final port, the most val'able cargo he c'n carry 's a good deed like that."

Here Skipper Joe's narrative ended. He dropped his head upon his breast and fell into a brown study. The fire burned low. It was late, and Ned went off to his bed, which consisted of a ship's hammock hung in the garret, and Dolly to hers, which was a sack of clean straw spread upon a cot in a closet-like room opening off Mrs. Park's bedroom; and they were both shortly asleep, lulled by the booming of the surf on the beach not far away.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOME OF WEBSTER.

THE days that followed were halcyon days to Ned and Dolly. Skipper Joe supplied them with an old punt to paddle about in; and as Mrs. Park insisted upon Dolly's learning to swim, if she and Ned were going about in a boat by themselves, Skipper Joe volunteered to teach her with Ned's help; for Ned was a perfect duck in the water, and could not have been a better swimmer even if he had had a Polynesian mother who had tossed him into the water when a baby, and so taught him to swim once for all by making him swim for his life.

Ned was slightly offended because his mother thought it best for Skipper Joe to superintend Dolly's swimming lessons.

"Just as if I couldn't teach Dolly to swim, mother! Just look here!" and he turned a somersault into the water and swam off, floating, plashing, leaping, and making as much commotion as a school of gambolling blue-fish.

"Yes, you are a fine swimmer, Ned," said his mother, consolingly; "but I shall feel safer about Dolly to have two with her when she is learning."

Dolly proved to be an apt pupil, and a very few lessons gave her confidence in her own powers; and when Mrs. Park saw her going through the water, looking in her flannel bathing-dress like a blue, brown-haired mermaid fresh from the "caverns of the deep," and as much at home, apparently, as the most accomplished mermaid could possibly be, she bade good-by to all anxiety, and saw with perfect equanimity the two paddle away day after day in the old punt, to which they had given the somewhat incongruous name of the *Daisy*.

The *Daisy* was a shallow, flat-bottomed boat, looking like nothing so much as a dripping-pan with one end pointed. But these two could not have got more fun out of her if she had been a thorough-rigged, well-victualled steam-yacht; not so much, in fact, for a steam-yacht could never have penetrated the narrow inlets and tiny streams that threaded these marshes like net-work.

So Dolly and Ned paddled about in great content, spearing crabs, catching cunners, dredging for shell-fish and sea-weed; sometimes sitting upon the edge of the *Daisy*, with their feet in the water, and disembarking now and then, when driven by hunger, to get up a private clam-bake. This was before the epoch of the Rhode Island clam-bake with which so many of us are familiar. But Dolly and Ned had read that delightful old book, "Robin's Journal among the Arabs," and knew the val-

ue of hot stones; so, with drift-wood they made a fire in a hole in the sand and heated their stones therein; then packed their clams and covered them with sea-weed, if not scientifically, yet with satisfactory results. And years after, when the grown-up Ned and Dolly did eat for the first time a real Rhode Island clam-bake, Ned paused as he was conveying his first clam to his mouth, and smiling roguishly said, "D' you remember, Dolly, our clam-bakes on the Marshfield 'ma'shes?'"

One day a couple of men came down from inland with a cart for menhaden. These are small fish that are often driven up into shallow water by sharks. Dolly watched the men as they hauled them in by the hundreds.

"Are they to eat?" she ventured to ask.

"Bless y'r soul, no," was the grinning reply. "We use 'em f'r manure. They're chock-full o' ile —tew greasy t' eat."

"The squire told 'em 'bout 'em. *They'd* never 'a found out," said Skipper Joe, contemptuously. (Dolly had learned by this time that the "squire" was Daniel Webster, whose farm lay near the marshes.) "They're fust-rate t' enrich the sile," he continued; "but the wust o' 'em is, they breed a swarm o' pesky green flies, 'n the folks call 'em 'Webster flies.' He [meaning Webster] is a master-hand f'r knowin' everything. Knows 'bout everything that's wuth knowin', I reckon."

It was one of these men who told Dolly the

name of a queer-looking fish she saw one day prowling about in the shallow water, stirring up other tiny fish and swallowing them. It had a pair of wing-like fins attached just below its big head, and it ran about, apparently, on something that looked like orange-colored claws.

"Them?" said the man; "them's grunters; 'n some folks calls 'em sea-robins, 'n some Cape Cod ministers."

Dolly thought he was poking fun at her, though he spoke with the utmost gravity, but Skipper Joe assured her he was not.

"When you catch 'em they grunt," explained Skipper Joe, "'n that's why they call 'em grunters; 'n it's easy 'nough t' see why some folks call 'em sea-robins; but *why* they're called Cape Cod ministers 's more 'n I know. Some folks eat 'em, but some folks c'n eat anything," he added.

Meanwhile the haymakers cut the salt grass and carried it in gundalows to the high lands to be cured. These gundalows were clumsy boats or barges, as unlike the graceful gondola in appearance as in name. Dolly and Ned occasionally took a sail in one of these gundalows on top of the salt grass, from which expedition they always went back with fresh pleasure to their beloved dripping-pan of a *Daisy*.

Mrs. Park improved this bit of leisure out of her busy life with reading and sketching, and so the still sunny, early September days drifted by all too

swiftly; and just two days before the end of the haying season an adventure which seemed a fitting close to this golden period, this cluster of red-letter days, befell our hero and heroine.

These marshes consisted in part of vast level plains, over which the damp sea-breezes swept and the shrieking sea-gulls flew to and fro. These salt plains were inhabited by the kingfisher, the quawk, and the heron. The quawk, a bird with slender yellow legs and a long beak, fished at low tide for minnows and tiny crabs. He scarcely moved as the *Daisy* paddled noisily by, only looking up with reproach in his fishy eyes as the waves made by the passing boat swept out of his reach some dainty bit of garbage.

These plains were varied with mounds, the work of the ocean in past ages, when these marshes were sandy beaches and fierce winds piled the sand in heaps. These heaps gradually hardened, and were held together by the roots of marine plants, and so in time became round, grassy hills. And while it might seem almost impossible for any one to be lost in the intricacies of the small streams which threaded these marshes, it was, after all, the easiest thing in the world, for they really formed a labyrinth as bewildering as the famous one of Crete. The tide ebbed and flowed in these narrow streams, and not a few times the *Daisy* was stranded on a muddy bottom and had to wait for the incoming tide. At such times, however, Mrs. Park felt no

anxiety at their prolonged absence, for, as 'Zekle sensibly remarked, "Nobody c'd git drownded where there wa'n't no water."

Well, as I was saying, two days before the time fixed for their return to Byfield, Dolly and Ned went off after an early dinner for a row—a long afternoon row. "We must make the most of the time now, Dolly," said Ned, as they moved slowly along, Ned sculling, "for we shall have to go away day after to-morrow."

"How I wish we could take the *Daisy* with us!" said Dolly, patting the dingy old punt affectionately.

"'Twould be no good if we did," replied Ned. "Mother wouldn't let us go on the pond, an' she's too big for the brook. I say, Dolly, I'll make a raft when we get back. A raft 'll sail in the brook first-rate, for I've tried it. I sailed down once 'most to the saw-mill, an' came mighty near going over the dam. 'Most wish I had."

"Oh, there's an eel!" shrieked Dolly, and seizing the spear which they always carried in the boat, she made a lunge, lost her balance, and went over into the tide mud, much to the discomfiture of the eel, which squirmed off in company with a dozen spider-crabs, that, like itself, were feeding on a dead quawk. It was not an unusual thing to happen to Dolly, and Ned promptly helped her back into the boat, wiped off the mud with his pocket-handkerchief, and then, in an absent-minded fit,

wiped his perspiring face on the same. Dolly's hat had tumbled off, and a fresh layer of mud was added to the accumulations of the previous ten days. The hat was originally white straw, trimmed with a pink ribbon, but the combined influences of sea-air and water, sun and mud, had sadly marred its pristine splendor. Dolly herself was as brown as a Marshpee Indian, and the clothes of the two were interesting as geological specimens with their daily deposits of varied dirt. Truly, an exceedingly grimy but very happy pair they looked.

As they sculled they came within view of the sea. It was of a pale blue, a tint so exquisite that Ned dropped his oar and let the *Daisy* drift while they looked. The blue water seemed a long way off, and just above the water-line, silhouetted against the silvery horizon, a ship sailed slowly along with every sail set, even to the graceful sky-sails.

"Look, look, Ned!" exclaimed Dolly. "It sails in the air! What is it? Is it the *Flying Dutchman?* Is it a ghost of a ship?"

"I think," replied Ned, slowly, "it must be a mirage. I've heard Skipper Joe talk about 'em, and don't you remember Robins saw 'em in the desert?—not ships, but palms and springs, where there weren't no palms or springs. It's only a reflection, that's what it is. The real ship!—look quick, Dolly!" and Dolly, following the direction of Ned's finger, saw suspended high up in the air

a big square-rigged vessel, and just above it another exactly like it, only inverted, the top-masts of the one touching the top-masts of the other.

"Oh, it's like the enchanted horse in the 'Arabian Nights!' only it would be ever so much nicer to sail than to ride," said Dolly.

"I think I'd rather sail in the *Daisy*," said Ned, picking up his oar; and then they waited till the mirage had faded, and nothing was to be seen but the pale-blue sea and the silvery horizon.

Fleetest-footed of all those perfect days seemed this one, and before they were aware the sun was low in the west and it was time to go home. But when they began to take their bearings, and tried to decide in which direction the old Marchant House lay, they were completely puzzled. Ned went up on a mound to look, but he could see nothing save what appeared to be an endless reach of similar mounds. They hallooed, but nothing replied. Only the screams of the sea-gulls could be heard, and even these grew faint as the sun sank and they flew swiftly past to their nesting-place on some distant island. The two looked blankly at each other.

"Well, this is a jolly go!" was Ned's remark.

"Do you think we shall have to stay all night on the marsh?" asked Dolly, trying to look anxious, but really thinking it would not be such a bad thing, after all.

"It looks like it," replied Ned, "unless Skipper

Joe finds us: an' I don't see how he can find us any better than we can find him."

"The sand is nice and soft, and it won't hurt our clothes to sleep on it," said Dolly, looking herself over critically.

"And I say, Dolly," put in Ned, "I can turn the *Daisy* over you bottom side up, to keep you warm, you know."

"Oh, wouldn't that be fun!" exclaimed Dolly, clapping her hands, brown with tan and grimy with the experiences of the day.

But it wasn't her destiny to spend the night on the "ma'sh," with the *Daisy* for a blanket. Even while they were talking they heard footsteps. A hat was seen rising over a sand-hill near by—a big slouched hat—and this was followed by a tall man bearing a gun on his shoulder, and carrying a pouch of game at his side, while an English pointer followed close by his heels.

At the same instant Dolly whispered, "It's the man with the head like the State-house dome;" and Ned, in a still more subdued tone with a shade of awe in it, "Halloo, Dolly, it's Daniel Webster!" Webster stopped as he caught sight of the pair. It was a queer group to come upon at dusk in these lonely marshes—the old punt, the tall, frank-faced, blue-eyed boy, the slender, girlish figure, with the clustering brown hair, nut-brown cheeks, and hazel eyes—queer but picturesque, flushed with the rosy hues of the after-glow.

Webster looked an instant and then spoke. "Good-evening," he said. "May I ask who you are, and can I do anything for you? Have you lost your way?"

"I am Edward Park, sir," replied Ned, manfully, "and this is my cousin, Dorothea Winslow."

"Ah!"—and a sunny smile beamed forth from the cavernous black eyes—"then you are the son of my friend Park, of Byfield, and this"—turning to Dolly, and raising his old slouched hat with the same graceful deference he might have shown to a Russian princess or an English court lady—"and this is the little lady who attended our convention, and who so bravely frightened off the thieves. But may I ask how you chance to be here?"

"We've got lost," replied Ned. "We're at the old Marchant House with my father and mother and the haymakers. Dolly and I are out with the boat. We've been out every day, but we never got lost before. Can you tell us which way to go and how far it is?"

"I'm afraid it's a long way to the old Marchant House, too far for you to go at this late hour, and I doubt, with the evening coming on, if you could find it. The best thing for you to do will be to leave your boat here and go home with me. My house is not far, and I will send a man to Mrs. Park to let her know you are safe. Then you shall spend the night with me, and I count myself happy to have the opportunity of entertaining the son

and niece of my old friend," he added, with that cordial hospitality which always put every one, old and young, at their ease.

"Thank you," replied Ned, with a shade of hesitation in his voice. He was not quite sure it was the thing to do, but what else could he do? And as to Dolly, she glanced distressfully at her soiled frock, and was painfully conscious of her battered hat. But Webster did not wait.

"This is the way," he said, walking on, "and, as I said, it is only a short distance."

As they walked away, Dolly turned to look at the *Daisy*, where she lay high and dry, as the tide had left her while they were trying to find the direction of the Marchant House. It was like saying "farewell" to an old friend, for Dolly had a presentiment that she would never see the *Daisy* again.

"Good-by, dear old *Daisy*," she whispered to herself, as she hurried on after the two, who had got in advance of her while she lingered.

They entered the house by a side door, and Dolly was at once consigned to a maid, who took her to a bedroom and assisted her in her toilet. She bathed her face and hands, brushed out her tangled curls into a fluffy mass of ringlets, and after having her shoes brushed and her dusty frock well shaken, she contemplated with much satisfaction her renovated figure in the tall pier-glass which enabled her to see herself from top to toe. The

fresh lace in her frock, which Mrs. Park always insisted should go in every morning, whether Dolly was to pass the day in the parlor or in the woods, gave a lady-like finish to her dress.

"Yes, I think I'll do, after all," she said to herself, with a sigh of relief.

Ned had passed through very much the same experience in the hands of the personal attendant of his host, and the two, as they met in the parlor, exchanged smiles of congratulation.

"You look first-rate," whispered Ned to Dolly, as they bent their heads together above a group of Japanese figures in ivory. "How did you manage it? girls have such a knack!"

"I don't look a bit nicer than you," replied Dolly. "It must be the brushing."

"And the soap and water," added Ned, and then they followed their host out to dinner.

The dining-room was long and low-ceiled, with a circular sideboard of mahogany inlaid with holly. There were a few guests besides the family. Webster was very merry all through dinner. He had had a good day's shooting, and gave the history of his shots in detail, and told how he had met with two salt-haymakers with whom he had conversed a short time, and after he had turned away he heard one of them say, "Quite a sensible old fellow, ain't he?" The speaker had evidently not known him, and was struck by so much intelligence combined with such shabby clothes. Ned tried to

imagine what his surprise might be should he ever learn that the "sensible old fellow" was the "great Webster."

Just before helping to the joint of mutton which he had himself carved, Webster looked inquiringly at Ned's right-hand neighbor, a young man addressed as "Port."

"Yes, *my* name is Leathers," said Port, promptly sending up his plate.

"And so is mine," said his opposite neighbor, Jackson.

Webster, catching Ned's look of surprise, laughed as heartily as a boy, and then told the story which has since grown so familiar through his biographies: how a family named Leathers, living in New Hampshire, for some good office rendered to the town, were each to have a pound of tobacco and a pint of rum by calling for them. The family was a very large one, but at last, so great was the number of applicants for the tobacco and rum, it was thought best to put the question, "Is your name Leathers?" to each fresh applicant. The phrase had been adopted as a favorite byword with the Webster family and their familiar guests.

After dinner Ned and Dolly, with the younger guests, went through the numerous rooms, looking at the choice bits of bric-à-brac and the pictures on the walls. The Webster mansion was — we speak of it in the past tense, as unhappily it was burned a few years ago — a rambling house,

put together piecemeal, the fine library having been built by Webster and planned with the help of his daughter Julia. On the crowded walls Dolly espied a silhouette portrait in a small plain frame. This kind of portrait was made by cutting the outlines of the head and face from paper, and framing the paper so cut over a bit of black silk. These portraits were of an era preceding that of daguerreotypes and photographs. Under this silhouette was written, "My dear Mother. D. W." Dolly wondered a little that so plain and simple a portrait should have a place among such fine paintings, not having yet learned that our most valued possessions are often the portraits, however simple, of those who have loved us.

In the library a wood-fire burned in the open fireplace, and through the window over the mantle Webster pointed out the ancient burial-ground, or "God's acre," where, as he told them, Peregrine White is buried—Peregrine White, the baby born on the *Mayflower*, whose shivering little figure you may see to-day in the painting of the Landing of the Pilgrims, in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth. There, too, lies Edward Winslow, one of the early governors of Plymouth, "who is my ancestor," said Dolly, with pardonable pride. Webster smiled upon her as she said it, and said himself that "a noble ancestry was a better inheritance than priceless gems." He told her that he had caused the trees to be cut and trimmed so as to give him this

view of the distant burial-ground, which Dolly thought a queer thing to do, though of course she did not say so.

On either side the chimney hung life-size, full-length portraits of Webster and Lord Ashburton. Lord Ashburton, one of the guests told Dolly as he saw her looking at him attentively, was associated with Webster in the defining of boundaries between Canada and the United States, and Dolly "made a note of it," like Captain Cuttle, and secretly resolved to read more history.

That was a marvellous evening, one never to be forgotten by our Dolly and Ned. The firelight played over the walls of the spacious library, making fantastic shadows, while the guests listened to the voice which had held spellbound so many thousands. Webster talked a good deal about the older English writers with one of his guests, a distinguished literary gentleman, and recited in his wonderful voice almost the whole of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village;" and Dolly dates from that evening a love for those older writers which has proved a solace under many adverse circumstances.

"And now," said Webster, the next morning after they had breakfasted, "we'll go out to the barn and look at the cattle."

The night before, what with the dusk and the embarrassment of their arrival, Dolly and Ned had scarcely noticed the outside of the house. As they stepped out into the gravelled walk, and looked

about them, it seemed very pleasant and home-like in the morning sunlight, with its many gables and cosey verandas. At one corner of the house stood a magnificent elm of great girth and height, whose pendent branches swept the green turf. In its shade was a rustic chair, a favorite seat of Webster's.

Dolly uttered a cry of delight as they entered the breezy, hay-scented barn, and Webster turned with a smile of pleasure as he heard her.

"So you like barns and cattle as well as I do," he said, and Dolly blushed and dimpled to be placed in the same category with so distinguished a man, if it were only as a lover of cattle.

The beautiful cattle, with their soft, beseeching eyes and sleek coats, were standing patiently in their stalls. (The Greeks knew what beautiful eyes were, and they called their great goddess the ox-eyed Juno.) As Webster pulled down from the mows handfuls of succulent corn-fodder and fed them, calling attention to their fine points, he said to Ned, humorously, "As I tell Fletcher, they are the best of company, a good deal better than any I find in the Senate Chamber." And any one could see that he had a genuine love for the fine creatures.

They lingered long in the barn, for the master seemed loath to go, although the young Jackson and Port waxed impatient to be gone on their fishing trip to Cut River, for which the boat on the pond in the rear of the house was being got ready.

But Webster had to take a look at his hens, and count the eggs laid during the morning. At last they went out again into the sunshine, and Webster pointed out to Dolly the hill where his favorite horses were buried — "with all the honors of war," he said, "standing upright, with halters and shoes on." One of these horses was named "Wilmot Proviso."

When word had been sent to Mrs. Park of the whereabouts of Dolly and Ned, a message had also been added that they would be returned the next morning. So in due time the barouche, with its span of black horses, was brought to the door, and the last glimpse of Webster, as they went down the drive, showed him in the act of taking a flying leap over the fence in competition with the young Port.

To this charming adventure there was just one drawback. As she had feared, Dolly never saw the *Daisy* again; but a water-color of it, executed at a later day from memory, now hangs in her cosey of coseys.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE MADAM.

"How is the Little Madam?" Dolly had heard Skipper Joe ask of Mrs. Park one day when they were at the Marchant House.

"She's as well and happy as usual," was the reply.

"Jest the same here, I s'pose," he continued, touching his forehead significantly.

"Just the same."

"Well, it's queer—queer," said Skipper Joe, meditatively. "Don't never sense nothin' o' what's happened. It's queer—dum queer."

So when Dolly heard one morning a buzzing as though a swarm of honey-bees had taken possession of the dancing-hall, and opening the door and peeping in saw a little woman spinning off in the south-east corner who looked exactly like a picture, just as though she might have stepped that moment out of Grimm's fairy tales, she knew at once, by a sort of intuition, that this was the Little Madam.

This small woman was exceedingly small, short as well as slight; her skin was dark, a clear, soft dark, and she had black, velvety eyes, with long

eyelashes, and small hands and feet, smaller than Dolly's. She wore over her black hair a kind of mantle of white muslin, which framed her face like a nun's coif, and was crossed upon her bosom. Her scanty gown was white, too, a peculiarity which specially struck Dolly in a latitude where white was reserved for church-going and other state occasions.

She was stepping briskly back and forth by the side of her spinning-wheel, drawing out the long thread, and then with the reverse motion of her wheel winding it upon the spindle back and forth, like a true fairy godmother. The sunbeams fell athwart the wheel and the reel and the tiny tripping figure, and it all did really look so much like a picture that might dissolve any moment, like the mirage of the Marshfield marshes, that Dolly did not venture to speak lest it might vanish. The little woman seemed busy with happy thoughts, for she smiled to herself as she crooned a song, the air of which was sweet, but the words were foreign.

Altogether, Dolly's curiosity was deeply excited; and as she softly closed the door and ran downstairs to find Ned, the first words she said to him were,

"Who is that little woman in the hall?"

"The Little Madam," replied Ned, just as Dolly expected, and pegging away on the kite he was making.

"And who is the Little Madam?" queried Dolly;

"and how did she come—on a broom, or in a pumpkin-shell coach with mice for horses?"

"Halloo! what's up?" exclaimed Ned, looking up.

"I wish you'd tell *who* the Little Madam is, and *where* she came from, and all about her. I never knew a thing about her till this minute, and where have you kept her hid?"

"Hid!" ejaculated Ned, bewildered. "Why, she lives on Hemlock Island."

"And *where*, for pity's sake, is Hemlock Island? Oh, Ned, Ned! I'm dying with curiosity to know all about her, and do put up that old kite and tell me—a good long yarn, like one of Skipper Joe's."

Ned laughed good-naturedly. "I can spin my yarn and work on my kite too, Dolly; and I do suppose she looks queer to you. But I'm used to her, you know. I've known her almost ever since I've known anybody. But there isn't much of a story. Only Skipper Joe picked her up at sea somewhere, drifting round in an old boat or something, an' brought her to mother; an' she's sort o' crazy—don't know who she is herself, nor where she lived, nor what happened to her, nor anything. She likes to be by herself, so father lets her live in his old house on Hemlock Island; and she's learned to spin, and spins for folks, an' knits, an' winters she lives here."

"Not much of a story, Ned! I should think so, indeed! Why, she might be a princess, a real

princess. Picked up drifting in a boat—oh, it's splendid! Say, Ned," said Dolly, coaxingly, "take me down to Hemlock Island, will you?"

"All right," replied Ned.

The Little Madam did not dine with the family that day. Her dinner, such as she liked—a potato salad, a glass of milk, and a custard—was taken up to her by Thankful herself, who remarked as she walked off with the tray, "She's a poor loony cretur', one o' them folks mentioned in Scriptur', I reckon—them that's hungry, 'n sick, 'n in prison." Thankful never waited upon people whom she considered able to wait upon themselves, and seemed to consider an apology necessary for so doing.

The early morning of the next day saw Dolly and Ned on their way to Hemlock Island. There was a third person with them—I think we may call him a person. The stage which brought Dolly's trunks from Boston brought him also. He was walking along by Dolly's side, with Dolly's hand upon his tawny head and a look of supreme content in his intelligent eyes. This third person was a magnificent St. Bernard, Dolly's playmate in her cradle and her faithful friend and servitor ever since. He had fished her out of the frog-pond on the Common in her later babyhood, into which she had fallen while Nora her nurse was just a-speakin' with her friend, a neighboring coachman, and he had badly bitten an old woman who

attempted to kidnap her once upon a time when she had wandered off down Joy Street.

The road to Hemlock Island was a true by-way, a serpentine lane which ran part of the way between high grassy banks overrun with wild vines and flowering herbs like an English lane, and part of the way was shaded by trees of hickory and pine. Why called Hemlock Island is a mystery, unless it was because no hemlocks grew there; neither was it an island: it was a promontory making out into Wintuxet Lake, and it had a fine growth of wood, with extensive pasturage, where large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep grazed through the summer.

Around the enclosure wherein stood the Little Madam's dwelling a hundred cattle were placidly feeding that day. The lane came to an end in the Little Madam's front yard. The house was small, consisting of one room, besides a bedroom and lean-to, and it was a perfect bower of a nest, being entirely overgrown with woodbine, with the exception of the windows and door, even to the chimney-top, from which a long streamer waved like a ship's pennant. Morning-glories blossomed out from the woodbine, and the Little Madam's love of flowers betrayed itself in a perfect burst of bloom on either side of the path leading from the gate to the door.

The Little Madam was not the first exile, if exile she may be called, who had found shelter in this

quiet spot. To the west of her dwelling, in the pasture, was an old well, around which the "Bouncing Bets," or more politely speaking, the "French Pinks," ran riot, and hard by a slight depression in the turf indicated the spot where once stood the dwelling of an exiled family from Acadie. The family had planted a garden there, and the place was and is known to this day as "the French Garden." Perhaps Longfellow's Evangeline found a brief resting-place here—who knows?

As Dolly and Ned entered the wide-open door, a voice, a soft muffled voice, said, "How do! how do! Shake hands!" and immediately the owner of the voice, an imperial white Australian cockatoo, erected his canary-colored crest, opened wide his wings, and uttered a loud, hoarse cry.

"He doesn't like Gaston — he's afraid of him, Dolly," said Ned.

"Gaston, go out and lie down," said Dolly; and with an indignant look at the cockatoo as the cause of his expulsion, Gaston walked out with true canine dignity, and lay down on the door-step in the sun.

"What a lovely, queer-looking place!" said Dolly, looking around. The cockatoo had subsided, and from his perch was bowing graciously, holding out his claw and saying, "Shake hands, shake hands."

Ned took his claw, when again he shrieked, elevating his crest and opening wide his wings.

"He's showing off, now; he wants you to admire him," said Ned.

"Pretty cockatoo! pretty cockatoo!" laughed Dolly, and thereat he sprang upon her wrist and bestowed a kiss, a true sibilant kiss, upon her pouting lips, and before she could remonstrate he was back upon his perch, chuckling audibly, and saying, "Pretty cockatoo! pretty cockatoo! Kiss me, kiss me!"

His second scream had brought in the Little Madam, somewhat flushed and breathless, from her beehives.

"Ah, it is you, my good Ned, is it?" she said. "I feared the bad boy. Bad boy tease my pretty cockatoo." She held out her hand and the bird sprang upon it, making soft, cooing sounds the while, and caressing her with his beak and wings.

"Skipper Joe brought it to her, Dolly," said Ned.

"Yes, Skipper Joe; he my good friend," said the Little Madam. She did not talk much, but looked smilingly from Ned to Dolly, and brought out a plate of pink-cheeked peaches and purple grapes for them. She had a bewildered, seeking look in her beautiful eyes, as though she might be seeking for that lost life of hers, and Dolly became so absorbed watching her as she sat with crossed hands, now smiling, now falling into a reverie, that she quite forgot the peach she was eating. But Ned, to whom the Little Madam was a more familiar

object, ate the fruit with boyish appetite, and emptied the plate.

The room, which was an unusually large room, —as well it might be, being the only one—had the same dainty characteristics as its mistress. The Little Madam herself and the cockatoo gave to it a foreign air. Boxes of sweet-scented flowers bloomed in the windows, which drew the bees that buzzed in and out, and about the Little Madam familiarly, lighting on her nun's coif. An immense gray, basket-like fungus, which the Little Madam must have found in some of her wood rambles, was nailed against the wall and filled with wild vines, which grew thriftily in this apparently congenial atmosphere.

There seemed to be a secret understanding between this little lady and what we human beings are pleased to call the dumb creation—the birds, the insects, the beasts. But are they really *dumb?* Does not each kind have a language which we in our ignorance cannot understand? Did not Gaston speak when he roused from his sleep, walked up to the Little Madam, and put his big tawny head under her little brown hand? This was as plain as human speech. It said, "I trust you," and so Dolly interpreted it.

"See Ned!" she exclaimed, "Gaston never takes to strangers—he hates to have them touch him; and there he is asking the Little Madam to pat him."

For days Dolly could not get the thought of her out of her mind.

"She isn't really crazy, is she, Auntie?" she asked one day, returning again to the exhaustless topic.

"No," was Mrs. Park's reply. "She has simply forgotten everything up to a certain time."

"And what do you suppose made her, Auntie? Ned says Skipper Joe found her drifting in a boat."

"Yes; a ship on which Skipper Joe was first mate picked her up somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. Of course they could find out nothing by her, because she remembers nothing. That was ten years ago. She has learned to speak English tolerably well, and she never speaks anything else, though she sings foreign songs which Skipper Joe says are Portuguese. Skipper Joe brought her here to me. She is fond of being out-of-doors, and used to wander off in summer-time, till your Uncle Harry fitted up the old house for her. She seems very happy there."

"But, Auntie, it must be very lonely down there," continued Dolly. "Isn't she ever afraid?"

"She is not like others, you must remember, Dolly; she does not know what fear is. Though lately I have seen some signs of it, and I am a little troubled about some things of which, if I tell you, Dolly, you must not speak."

"Oh no, indeed!" said Dolly, rapturously, charmed, as most of us are, at the prospect of a secret being imparted to our keeping.

"I suppose," continued Mrs. Park, "she is, or rather was, a Catholic, and some ignorant people here have found it out and profess to look upon her with horror. And some troublesome boys, who only want an excuse for doing so, have been teasing her lately. That was what she meant by 'bad boy.' We could stop the boys teasing her if it were not for some older people who ought to know better."

"Oh, what a shame!" exclaimed Dolly, indignantly. "What a mean, mean thing to tease such a helpless little woman!"

"My dear Dolly," replied Mrs. Park, with that wisdom we gain by experience, "that is the very reason they tease her, because she is helpless. Cowards do not dare to touch those who are able to defend themselves," and Dolly was silent for some moments.

"Well, she has some good friends any way," she said at last—"you and Uncle and Skipper Joe and Thankful."

"And Thankful is a host in herself," replied Mrs. Park, smiling; "and you must watch over her too, Dolly. Go and see her often; she seems to have taken a great liking to you and Gaston."

And Dolly was proud of the trust reposed in her.

CHAPTER V.

SKATTA.

AMONG the contents of the trunks sent down to Dolly from Boston was a copy of "Ivanhoe," bound in drab boards. Now "Robin's Journal among the Arabs" was bound in dingy leather. So Ned knew from experience that very good things may have a homely or even rough exterior, like a watermelon or a chestnut. He opened the book and began to read aloud.

"'In that pleasant district of Merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster.'"

And Dolly sank down among the litter of things which she had tumbled out of her two trunks to listen, and there Aunt Anna found them at the end of three hours, in animated talk, having just finished the tenth chapter, which closes with Gurth's meeting with Rebecca in the house of Isaac of York.

"Rebecca is a trump," remarked Ned, summing up in that expressive word the universal feeling in regard to the beautiful Jewess.

"And isn't the Disinherited Knight splendid? I wonder how he came out the next day. I should so like to see a tournament, Ned. Oh, do read on!" said Dolly, her cheeks aglow with excitement.

"After dinner," said Aunt Anna—"dinner is ready now." And after dinner it was, for they went up into the hay-mow and read till it was time to fetch the cows home; and if they did not, like Thackeray when he was a school-boy, sit up far into the night to follow the fortunes of Rebecca, it was only because they were not allowed to do so. Mr. and Mrs. Park had gone to Plymouth for the night, and Thankful found the two after ten o'clock still reading, and swooped them off to bed, right in one of the most thrilling parts of the story, where Rebecca throws down her embroidered glove, exclaiming,

"God will raise me up a champion. It cannot be that in Merry England, the hospitable, the generous, the free, where so many are ready to peril their lives for honor, there will not be found one to fight for justice. But it is enough that I challenge the trial by combat—there lies my gage."

"Oh, Thankful, it's too bad to make us go to bed now. Do let us just find out how Rebecca came out. Just read ahead a little bit and see, Ned. Only ten minutes, Thankful, please," pleaded Dolly, as eager for the fray as the most accomplished knight could possibly have been.

But Thankful was inexorable, and Ned, running

his eye over a page or two, and announcing that it looked as though it would take a hundred pages "to get Rebecca out of the scrape," Dolly went off reluctantly to bed, and dreamed that *she* was the Disinherited Knight, and had a joust with Thankful, wearing a brass kettle for a helmet and carrying a mince-pie for a shield, and Thankful, having received her death-blow, was suddenly transformed into the lovely Rowena, and crowned the Disinherited Knight with a wreath of cabbages.

As to Ned, he awoke 'Zekle, who slept in an adjoining room, in the dead of the night, by shouting, "Saint George for Merry England! To the rescue! to the rescue!" and pommelling the head-board violently. And it was "a marcy," as Thankful remarked the next morning, "that he didn't get his death a-readin' novils," for 'Zekle, only half awake, and possessed with the idea that burglars were entering the house in the absence of its master, got out his gun, heavily loaded with small shot for crows, and was just upon the point of firing it off in the direction of the pommelling when his brain cleared and he became aware that the voice was Ned's.

Thankful indulged in many more disrespectful remarks concerning "novils" the next morning while frying their favorite pancakes for breakfast, but Ned audaciously brought out "Ivanhoe" into the very kitchen itself, and he and Dolly finished

it comfortably on the settle, and were pleased to remark that Thankful did not close the door between the kitchen and the buttery, where she was mixing a batch of dough-nuts. Indeed, her ordinarily heavy step seemed to grow lighter as she stepped from the buttery to the frying-kettle, back and forth, and she held her skimmer suspended a moment in mid-air at that consummate moment where, his helmet being removed, Brian de Bois Gilbert is found to be dead, and the Grand Master exclaims,

"This is indeed the judgment of God. *Fiat voluntas tua.*"

"That's so!" said Thankful, lowering her skimmer and scooping the dough-nuts from the kettle *en masse.*

Thankful did not understand Latin, so her fervent response must have been to the sentiment expressed in English; and Thankful was apt to look upon the misfortunes of mankind in general as judgments.

Ned read the closing chapter and kept his voice bravely firm, while Dolly wept openly and copiously, and Thankful dropped a furtive tear into the frying-kettle. At least Ned said so, and the fat spluttered and sizzled suspiciously.

"Rebecca's wuth a dozen o' that set-up Rowena," remarked Thankful, as Ned closed the book, and Dolly drew a long sigh. "An' I reckon Ivaner thought so, only he couldn't help himself. Things

is unaccountably mixed 'n this world. I reckon she hen-pecked him well. She's jest the kind t' dew it." With which sentiments we most of us, including the immortal Thackeray, doubtless agree.

"Wouldn't it be fun to have a tournament, Ned?" Dolly said more than once during the days that followed the reading of "Ivanhoe." For nothing in that entertaining book seemed to have taken such hold upon her imagination as the famous tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche. "And if we only had another horse we'd have one, wouldn't we, Ned?" she said, confidentially, as the two were riding old Bill down to water one day.

"Gaston wouldn't make a bad horse," she continued, looking down at the noble fellow, who, as usual, was following closely in the wake of his beloved mistress; "but he isn't half big enough. Oh dear! can't you think of some way, Ned?"

"We might take the saw-horse or clothes-horse, Dolly. I'm sure I can't think of anything else," replied Ned, in despair. "I'm afraid Dapple or Sukey wouldn't do. There's too much go to 'em, an' we should catch it if anything happened to 'em."

"Oh no, of course not," replied Dolly, virtuously, but secretly wondering whether one of them could not be made to "do," after all.

But Dolly was saved from the probable consequences of riding Sukey in a tournament by a most happy happening. For things do some-

times happen just right in real life, as well as in story-books.

Her birthday was approaching—her thirteenth birthday. In fact, it was near at hand, and at last it dawned; and the sun, as he thrust his red face through a cloud of golden mist, sent a quivering dart betwixt the curtain and the window-frame of Dolly's bedroom, and touched her eyelids with a "Good-morning, my dear; it's your birthday, and it's time to get up."

Was it the sun, or Aunt Anna, or only a dream? As Dolly, not yet quite out of dream-land, was trying to solve this question, she was thoroughly aroused by Ned, who knocked at her door and called out, in a voice of suppressed excitement, "Hurry up, Dolly! oh, hurry up, do! If you only kn—" Here a hand was evidently clapped over his mouth—the hand of his mother, in fact—who laughingly said,

"Now, Ned, I told you so! It'll pop out before you know it. Come with me; it's the only safe thing to do;" and she dragged him off protesting.

"Now, mother, you know I can keep a secret a thousand times better than you or any other woman," he said, saucily. "I only wanted to sharpen Dolly's curiosity. But I say, isn't it—" Here his mother's hand went over his mouth again.

"There! you see, Ned, it's no use. Dolly will

hear you, and the cat'll be out of the bag unless you're gagged;" and she slipped half a melocotoon peach into his mouth, which effectually stopped the tide of speech.

Dolly had heard, and her curiosity was sharpened to a degree that would have sufficiently gratified Ned could he have witnessed it. She hurried with her dressing; but everything was perverse. Her hair twisted into knots; she pulled on a stocking wrong side out, and an impatient jerk broke the lacing of her shoe; then an important button flew off. She stopped to sew it on, and, as a fitting *finale* to this chapter of accidents, ran the needle deep into her finger.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" she exclaimed, sucking the wounded member. "'Haste makes waste,' Thankful says, and I should think so. It's just like a dream; the more I hurry the less I get on."

But at last she was in order, from the snood of blue ribbon in her hair to the carefully tied lacing of each slender shoe; and as she walked into the breakfast-room with a sunny "Good-morning!" Uncle Harry was sure no bonnier lassie could have been found that day throughout the length and breadth of New England, and indeed, for that matter, he might have safely challenged the whole United States.

"Many happy returns of the day, my dear!" he said, as she took her seat at the table, while Ned remained suspiciously intent upon the buckwheats

he was devouring at a rate that ordinarily would have called out a remonstrance from his mother.

The breakfast-room that morning seemed charged with an atmosphere at once delightful and provoking. Conversation flagged. Nobody seemed possessed of ideas on any subject except some forbidden one. Aunt Anna cast looks of warning at Ned and interchanged meaning glances with Uncle Harry; and the latter, in a fit of extreme absent-mindedness, poured the sirup over his bacon, and said, "No, my love," when 'Zekle came in to ask if he should take the oxen to Plympton to be shod after breakfast.

The breakfast-table stood in what was called the inner kitchen, and Thankful, as she put on fresh cakes and dispensed cream and maple-sirup, wore the inscrutable air of a Yankee sphinx. Absorbed in her riddle, she even neglected to snub 'Zekle, as he came in bringing a pound of dirt on each foot, which he distributed liberally about the kitchen. He, too, was evidently laboring under the weight of some mighty secret, or he never would have so forgotten the habits of neatness into which Thankful, after many years of persistent effort, had trained him. Indeed, Dolly shrewdly suspected that, after all, the oxen didn't need shoeing, and his inquiry was only a pretext to come in.

At last Ned finished his tenth buckwheat, and pushed back his chair, just as Dolly was thinking that she could not stand it another minute.

"May I be excused, mother?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied his mother, significantly, and he was out of the kitchen in a twinkling, while Gaston, upon whose tail he had trodden in his haste, set up a howl of remonstrance.

A profound, expectant silence, broken only by Gaston's plaintive moans, succeeded. For a brief moment you might have almost heard a fly wink. Then the door of the outer kitchen opened, a curious clatter as of brisk feet was heard, the door of the inner kitchen swung back, and Ned entered, leading a black Shetland pony, "all saddled and bridled," who, as she stepped daintily over the braided rugs which strewed the floor, looked as much at home as though she had had a house of her own, and a breakfast-table to sit down to regularly every day of her life. From the pony's bridle hung a card, which Ned, leading her up to Dolly, detached and presented with a low bow.

"Feed me, curry me, ride me, and love me. My name is Skatta," was on one side, and on the other was written, "A birthday gift for our dear daughter Dorothea, from papa and mamma."

"Old Bill won't have to carry two any more," said Ned, not waiting for Dolly to speak, who at first struggled between a desire to cry and to laugh at the same time—between pleasure over her birthday gift and regret for the absent father and mother. But Skatta made a diversion, and saved Dolly from the hysterical combination by thrusting her

nose into the wide-mouthed sugar-bowl and taking out a lump.

"Jump on, Dolly, do, right here," said Ned. "Mayn't she, mother?" and Dolly with one spring was on Skatta's back and the reins in her hands. "Look out for your head!" said Ned, as they went out, Thankful and 'Zekle ranging themselves on either side of the kitchen-door like a guard of honor.

"Oh, *isn't* she lovely, Ned?" said Dolly, getting her voice at last. "And wasn't it good of papa and mamma?"

"I always knew Uncle Malcolm was a brick!" was Ned's emphatic reply.

Skatta was next put through her paces and pronounced "perfect."

"And now, Ned," said Dolly, as she reined her up by the horse-block, "we can have our tournament," and Ned, nothing loath, assented.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOURNAMENT IN THE OLD MUSTER-FIELD.

THE spot selected for the tournament was the old muster-field in the rear of the meeting-house. This field was completely shut in on the west by a thick woods; the meeting-house and parochial horse-sheds screened it from observation on the highway side; the winding lane leading to the Little Madam's lay along its eastern border, and its southern extremity was lost in Hemlock Island. Altogether it was a secluded spot, exactly fitted for a nineteenth-century tournament.

Considerable time was necessarily spent in preparation. The important question of armor had first to be settled, and it proved to be a somewhat difficult as well as important question. In the little vignette on the title-page of the drab "Ivanhoe" was a mounted knight, knight and horse being both in complete armor. Skatta promptly settled the question of armor so far as she was concerned, when Dolly attempted to strap a tin pot-cover on her breast, by standing on her hind feet and snorting a vigorous protest. "Well, never mind," said Dolly; "'Ivanhoe' doesn't say anything about horse's armor, and we won't have any."

Great difficulty attended the finding of proper helmets. Ned suggested tin pails, brass kettles, and even the culinary iron pots, much to Dolly's disgust, for Ned did not take the tournament so seriously as she did. He saw the absurdity of it, and was disposed to view it in a comic light, although he pronounced it "jolly fun." At last a compromise was made with pasteboard. Dolly, who had a knack at cutting out things, fashioned two very tolerable helmets of pasteboard, covered with black cambric, which certainly looked like the genuine thing, although they would not stand hard thrusts.

As to breastplates, the covers surreptitiously unhinged from a couple of brass warming-pans which hung in the garret made capital ones, really quite pretty in effect. Ned manufactured two slender lances out of birch, and a pair of tin pot-covers served as shields. These pot-covers, be it said, were taken from the kitchen during Thankful's absence, as both Dolly and Ned had an unspoken feeling that this matter of the tournament had better be kept from the knowledge of the elders.

The armor of the two knights, at last complete, was taken over one night at dusk and hidden under a low clump of birches in Bailey's Bowl. Then the two, starting out the next morning, ostensibly for a ride to the Little Madam's and thence to the Ridge pasture for hickory-nuts, made a detour and arrived at Bailey's Bowl by way of Hemlock Island.

This Bowl was a deep, round depression in the western part of the muster-field, not deep enough to be called a valley. It seems that in early colonial times the people used to walk from Bridgewater to Plymouth to attend church, or, rather, "meeting," an almost incredible fact, when we remember that the distance by the Indian trail—much of the highway to-day is that same old trail—was eighteen miles.

They started on Saturday, and encamped Saturday and Sunday nights on this muster-field, which is therefore historic ground. And once upon a time one of their number, named Bailey, hungry from the long march, said, as he looked into the depths of the Bowl, "I wish it was full of bean-porridge." Hence the name of Bailey's Bowl.

Our two nineteenth-century knights, having no esquires to equip them, as did the knights of old, were obliged to put on their own armor, mutually helping. The handles of the pot-covers were a tight fit, and Dolly's plump arm was squeezed more than was agreeable, but she bore the discomfort manfully, as became a brave knight about to do battle for his "faire ladye." Skatta shied at the unwonted appearance of her young mistress, but old Bill, more experienced, looked placidly on, not surprised at any freak of these two, and utterly regardless of the clashing tin and brass as Ned mounted his back.

"I do hope he won't balk," said Dolly, anxious-

ly. Old Bill had a trick of balking at the critical moment of starting, and nothing would make him go but a handful of ashes crowded into his mouth. Whether he thought by going on he should leave the bad taste behind, or whether in thinking about the ashes he forgot to stand still, it is impossible to say. As 'Zekle replied, when asked if he knew the philosophy of it,

"D' know nothin' 'bout y'r pilosophy; it'll make him go, 'n that's 'nough f'r me."

So Ned had stuffed one of his trousers-pockets with ashes, to use in case old Bill should prove obstinate. But old Bill behaved as a well-intentioned horse should at a tournament, and trotted obediently to his place by a small pine in the eastern part of the muster-field, while Dolly guided Skatta near a ground savin to the west. These were the starting-places—the lists. Upon a small birch-tree hung a somewhat cumbrous laurel wreath, with which to crown the victor. The meeting-house clock was near the stroke of ten, and it was decided that its first note should be the signal for the onset.

The name "Old Bill" may give a wrong impression of that famous and tractable steed. He was not so very old, but he was lazy and safe, and so Ned was allowed to use him all he liked. He looked like a Dutch horse, low, round, and stout. Ned had tied blue ribbons to his bridle, and wore the same colors on his helmet and lance, while Dolly

and Skatta were decked with scarlet, for which embellishments Dolly's ribbon-box had been rifled.

For a moment or two they awaited the signal in silence, motionless, with uplifted lances, and they really did look extremely pretty and mediævalish —which means like the knights of those mystical Middle Ages. It seemed a pity there were no spectators, none but a flock of crows in the top of some tall pines in the western woods, that cried "Caw! caw!" as though they scented the battle.

The clock struck.

"Deschidado! deschidado!" shouted Dolly, who was the Disinherited Knight; while Ned, who was supposed to be Brian de Bois Gilbert, replied with "Beau-seant! Beau-seant!" the war-cry of the Templars.

I wish I could say that the horses "rushed" to the fray as did those in "Ivanhoe." But truth compels me to state that Skatta only got beyond a moderate trot. Neither did they meet with "a crash that might have been heard at a mile's distance." It having been necessary for the riders to make their preparations for the tournament secretly, they had not been able to practise sufficiently, and so found it difficult to manage their horses and long lances at the same time.

Ned got his bridle-reins twisted, and old Bill, instead of meeting Skatta half-way, as he should, ambled off in a north-westerly direction; while Skatta, urged on by the lance which Dolly help-

lessly poked into her ear, galloped away to the south-east, and owing to their blinding helmets—for they rode, of course, with visors down—it was some time before the riders could find each other.

But a second time they were at their starting-places, waiting with uplifted lances.

"Now," spoke Dolly, "we must have a signal. We can't wait an hour for the clock to strike. What shall we do?"

"Count," said Ned. "We'll count three together and then start"—which was a sensible if not a knightly arrangement.

"One, two, three!" counted the combatants in chorus, and this time they met to some purpose, for Skatta and old Bill barely missed of a collision, and Dolly's lance proving, as before, unmanageable, struck Ned's pasteboard helmet with great force, and Brian de Bois-Gilbert rolled ignominiously in the dust, as he did in the "Gentle and Joyous Passage of Arms at Ashby."

Skatta's impetus carried her with her rider well across the field, and it was some moments before Dolly drew rein at the spot where Ned lay on the ground, with old Bill standing over him touching him inquiringly with his nose.

Dolly sprang quickly from her saddle. At first she thought Ned was "playing 'possum," as the humming-bird does when caught, making believe dead. But when she spoke to him and he did not answer, and then lifting the pasteboard helmet saw

how white he looked as he lay with closed eyes; and then when she tried to lift him, and his head fell heavily and helplessly back upon her arm, her heart misgave her, terror seized upon her, and she ran swiftly across the field and the highway and the Green, never heeding a carriageful of travellers, who looked inquisitively at the flying maiden—*was* it a maiden with the black helmet, the brass breastplate, and the shining shield?—and burst in upon the astonished Thankful, who had just drawn a pound-cake to the mouth of the brick oven in order to test it with a broom straw, to see if it was "done."

"Oh, Thankful! Thankful!" cried the strange apparition, in a sepulchral voice, for the pasteboard helmet was thick, "come quick, do! for he's dead and I've killed him!"—for poor Dolly remembered remorsefully that it was she who had proposed the tournament.

"Who's dead? an' who 'r' you, I sh'd like t' know?" said Thankful, completely bewildered, and not even recognizing the familiar shield and breastplate.

"Why it's I—Dolly! Don't you know me?" and she tore off her helmet and threw it on the floor. "Hateful old thing! I hit him with my lance and knocked him off. We're playing tournament. Oh, hurry, Thankful, do!"

"Turnipment!" ejaculated Thankful, seeing a glimmer of light—for very little escaped Thankful's shrewd observation, and she had "mistrusted," as

she told Mrs. Park afterwards, that "they were up to somethin'," and had missed the warming-pan covers when she went up into the garret "a Thursday" to hang up the penny-royal and thoroughwort to dry.

"Lor', child, he ain't dead, only stunted, I guess. We'll bring him tew—don't y' worry;" and Thankful caught up the "camphire" bottle and the opodeldoc, and ran across the road, comforting Dolly by the way, to find Ned sitting up trying to collect his scattered senses, in which operation he was greatly assisted by Dolly throwing her arms — to one of which the tin pot-cover still clung closely— around his neck and kissing him violently.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed, surprised at this demonstration—for Dolly, although warm-hearted and impetuous, as we have seen, was not given to much kissing.

"Oh, I thought you were killed, Ned," she said, looking at him with shining eyes.

"Not by a long chalk, you bet!" was the reassuring reply, all the more reassuring from its slanginess. "And I say, Dolly, you beat, an' you'll have to be crowned."

"It's crown enough for me to see you alive; an' I'm sick o' the old tournament," she replied, as she put off her shield and breastplate.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Ned. "I've been knocked over a dozen times playing ball. Knocking down don't hurt a fellow."

Thankful had at once proceeded to bathe his head with the camphor, to which treatment Ned submitted with a good grace, although it got into his eyes and made them smart. But when she proposed a rubbing with the opodeldoc, he rebelled.

"Oh, pshaw, Thankful! I ain't a molly-coddle. What d'y think a fellow's made of? I can't be rubbed with opodeldoc every time I tumble down."

Meanwhile the ungrateful Bill and Skatta had betaken themselves to the juicy grasses of Bailey's Bowl, and were found feeding peacefully in its depths, caring naught apparently for the weal of their riders. But there was one who cared, and that was Gaston. He had watched the tournament with deep interest; he had stayed by the fallen Ned while Dolly had gone for help, and he now came up to her and, putting a paw on either shoulder, looked into hers with his speaking, sympathetic eyes.

"Dear old Gaston!" said Dolly, giving him a hug; "we're glad, aren't we!"

Having gathered up their armor and taken possession of their recreant steeds, they returned to the house, and who shall paint Thankful's dismay when she found the oven-door wide open, as she had left it in her haste, the pound-cake fallen flat, the loaves of raised cake ditto, the mince-pies cooled, and their delicate flakiness utterly spoiled—and the Honorable Mr. Quincy going to stop there

that very night to take supper, on his way to an anti-slavery meeting.

"I might 'a' known no good 'd come o' that novil," said Thankful, in her wrath, slamming the oven door. "They're a *de*vice o' the Evil One, my old mother used t' say, an' that's true 's preachin'."

But Thankful, even in her wrath, could not help smiling when she recalled those two in their armor. The pot-cover which served for Ned's shield had got a fearful dent in the fall, and it kept alive in Thankful's memory for many a day the lovely Rebecca and her ill-starred fortunes.

As to the laurel-wreath which had been woven for the victor, it was forgotten. It hung on the birch-tree all winter, beaten by storms of wind and rain, but being securely fastened did not fall, and in the early spring a pair of robins built their nest among its rusty leaves. Dolly and Ned saw it there one day when they were out May-flowering.

That evening, like Topsy, they "'fessed" their shortcomings to Mrs. Park. Ned, somewhat paler than usual from the effects of his fall, was cosily settled in his own special corner of the sofa.

"I thought a tournament must be so lovely," said Dolly, with a sigh, "and now I think they're just horrid."

"I wouldn't feel that way about it," said Mrs. Park, smiling. She had smiled a good deal during the narrative, for they had told her "all about it" literally, the difficulty in regard to armor and every-

thing, and it certainly was a very funny experience to which to listen. "After all, I expect a tournament is a much more charming thing to read about in books than it ever was in reality. We should not like the dust and the heat and the wounds."

"But," Mrs. Park went on, a little more seriously, "the *spirit* of knight-errantry is the same in all ages."

"Why, I thought tournaments were just play, like—like—"

"Puss-puss-in-the-corner," put in Ned.

"Yes, only men and women played," added Dolly.

And then Mrs. Park told them how a young man had to keep a solemn vigil through all the hours of the night preceding the day on which he took his vows of knighthood; and about Bayard, who kept his vows so well that, though he died four hundred years ago, he is still known as the chevalier "*sans peur et sans reproche;*" and about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and the search for the Holy Grail, and what it meant; and how all these beautiful stories, mythical though many of them are, teach one principle —love to God and man—which is just as binding now as when those knights took their solemn vows. And Dolly and Ned both felt, for a while at least, that though the age of prancing steeds and shining armor, of jousts, and queens of love and beauty, had gone by, the *soul* of it remained.

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH OF GASTON.

"FEED me, curry me, ride me, and love me," ran the legend on the card that hung from Skatta's bridle, and Dolly fulfilled it to the letter. A special stall was given to Skatta—not in the stable where Suke and Dapple and Bill, and the horses of the guests of the tavern, were kept, but in a corner of the clean, well-kept cow-barn, where was also a closet in which to lock up her saddle and bridle, of which closet Dolly had the key.

Every morning Dolly put on her "groom's dress" —an old *delaine* set aside for that purpose—gave Skatta her hay and oats, led her to water, and then curried and brushed her till every hair was straight and shiny, and her mane as wavy and glossy as Dolly's own.

Every day, too, except when it stormed, she obeyed the third injunction and rode her. The pretty Shetland, with Dolly on her back and the faithful Gaston by her side, became a familiar object to all that country-side, and rare were the occasions when Ned and old Bill did not form a part of the cavalcade. As they dashed by, Ned raising his cap gallantly and Dolly waving a kiss from her

finger-tips, the old aunties breathed a simultaneous "Bless the children!" Not infrequently they reined up their horses by the broad, flat door-stone which lay at the entrance of "The Hut"—for that was the name of the somewhat primitive building wherein the aunties dwelt. The latch-string was always out, literally, for these two, for The Hut, built of plank and unshingled, looked like a log-cabin, and had a primitive latch-string, as it should.

Dolly found these old aunties delightfully "jolly," as, you remember, Ned said she would, though the adjective "jolly" could be consistently applied to only one, and that one Aunt Debby. Aunt Debby was a plump, cushiony, dumpling of a woman, all the way of a bigness, with sparkling black eyes and a broad, ever-smiling mouth. She was the one who took the "heft" of the scrubbing and cooking, while Nanny did the "puttering." Poor Aunt Patty, palsy-stricken for many years, could only do a little knitting, and even this became sadly tangled in her shaking hands, and it was a part of Nanny's puttering to disentangle her yarn and pick up the numberless dropped stitches. So Aunt Patty, under Nanny's supervision, was able to knit a couple of pair of stockings a year, the doing of which was a great comfort to her.

Nanny was a singularly appropriate name for the simple-hearted, childlike woman who bore it. With her gentle absent-mindedness, she was a never-failing source of amusement to Debby.

She was always putting on her things upside down and wrong side out, and going off to meeting without any bonnet. Once she started without bonnet or "front"—the front being the indispensable old lady's "bang" of those days—and Aunt Debby, following her, laughed so at Nanny's absurd appearance in her best black-silk gown, with muslin kerchief crossed placidly over her bosom, and her short white hair her only head-covering, that she came near not catching her at all, and Nanny was barely saved the scandal of entering the meeting-house with uncovered head.

Aunt Debby herself, on ordinary occasions, wore a green calash—a queer head-gear, which looked like a chaise-top and shut up like an accordeon. This calash could be pulled over the face at will by means of a ribbon fastened to the front.

"You favor y'r gre't-gran'ma, my dear," said Aunt Debby to Dolly one morning, as they drew rein at her door—"now don't she, Nanny?—y'r gre't-gran'ma Marchant. She's light-c'mplected like Dorothea Williams was, an' she's got the same high way o' carryin' her head—uppish, some folks said, but I never did. 'F there ever *was* a good, kind woman 'twas Dorothea Williams, 'n she never set up t' be better 'n her neighbors, t' my way o' thinkin'. I remember, 's if 'twas yisterday, seein' her come out bride. She 'n Cyrus Marchant were a proper han'som' couple;" and Aunt Debby's twinkling black eyes took on a retrospective look.

"Oh, do you remember my great-grandma Marchant?" exclaimed Dolly, to whom a great-grandmamma seemed very far away indeed.

"Ay, lassie, an' she waur a braw leddy an' a bonnie. Her een were like the stars o' a simmer's night, soft and bright," said Debby, who often betrayed her Scotch descent by her speech, especially when going back into the past; but she always shook herself after it with a laugh, as now.

"Eh, my dear old mither! her Scotch tongue cleaves to me yet," she said. "Yes, dearie, I remember her well, and she was a brave leddy as well as a bonnie. D' y' mind, Nanny, the time she brought home the robber's ho's'?—leastways we thought 'twas a robber's ho's', for he never come for it, as an honest man would."

"Yes; it was a fearfu' happenin' for so young a lassie, but the Lord takes care o' his own," was Nanny's reply.

Dolly's eyes opened wide in expectant wonder. "Oh, tell me all about it, Aunt Debby. I never even heard of it before;" and she dropped the reins on Skatta's neck and leaned eagerly forward.

"'Twas the year afore she was merried to y'r gre't-gran'ther, Cyrus Marchant," said Aunt Debby, bringing her little flax-wheel out on the broad, flat door-stone, and seating herself beside it, so that not a moment should be lost. "She'd gone over t' Triphammer f'r a matter o' ten pounds or so th't Squire Elderkin was owin' t' y'r gre't-gre't-

gran'ther Williams. 'Twas a part o' Dorothea's dowry, an' was goin' t' buy her weddin'-gown, which Cap'en Nehemiah Higgins had jest brought home from Chainy—a white satin covered with lilies o' th' valley in shinin' siller. I saw her merried 'n that same gown, an' she looked like a lily o' th' valley hersel'; an' when she died, a matter o' three years a'ter, Cyrus Marchant said she sh'd be buried 'n that weddin'-gown, an' go down t' th' grave as a bride; an' buried in it she waur, an' she looked like a pure lily o' th' valley as she lay in her coffin, wi' her babby on her breast. An' y'r gre't-gran'ther went a-moanin' all his days, an' never merried ag'in.

"But this ain't tellin' you about the robber's ho's'," said Aunt Debby, briskly, giving a vigorous twirl to the wheel with her foot. "I'm a chatterin' old woman, that's what I am. Well, as I was a-sayin', she'd gone down t' Triphammer f' the siller, an' was a-comin' home, an' in th' woods betwixt here 'n there—or that *was* 'twixt here 'n there, f'r it's a' gone lang syne—a horseman came canterin' up, an' stopped an' spoke t' Dorothea, tryin' t' be p'lite; but Dorothea said she mistrusted him th' minute she set eyes on him. Seems sometimes 's though the Lord's angels did watch over his'n to warn 'em. An' he talked about the exc'llent good crops, an' had she heard how Silas Sweet's ship was lost last year 'n th' Chainy seas an' him just got home, an' how Colonel Sturtevant's best cow

'd died, an' other things, t' make Dorothea think he wa'n't no stranger 'n them parts, 'n she needn't be afeard o' him. But th' more th' crittur talked, th' more Dorothea mistrusted him; tho' she wa'n't afeard, not she, f'r she had a high sperit, an' was only a-castin' about 'n her mind how she c'd git rid o' him; an' then he said 'twas a lonesome bit o' woods f'r a young leddy t' ride through alone in, 'n 'twas well f'r her t' have his comp'ny; 'n jest then his saddle-girt' loosed 'n slipped, 'n he jumped off t' fix it, callin' t' Dorothea t' wait a minute. An' while he was a-stoopin' t' tighten th' girt', Dorothea see a big pistol stickin' out o' the bosom o' his ruffled shirt, an' quick as a flash she struck his ho's' with her ridin'-whip, an' giv' the word t' Sunset, her own ho's', an' off they both went, knockin' over th' villain in th' dirt, though he scrambled up 'n fired off his pistol at 'em jest as they were goin' out o' sight 'n a turn o' the road, an' Dorothea heard th' bullet whiz close by, an' it clipped off a bit o' Sunset's ear. But that only made 'em go faster; an' when Dorothea got home, her father said if nobody didn't come f'r th' ho's' it sh'd be hers, an' what was in th' saddle-bags sh'd be hers. An' nobody never did come f'r th' ho's', an' in the saddle-bags was two hundred pounds in gowd an' siller, and Dorothea had th' biggest dowry 'f any girl in Byfield."

"Ned!" spoke Dolly.

They had been riding for some time in a silence

rather unusual for these two. They had left Aunt Debby's, and were on their way to Hemlock Island and to see the coal-pits.

"Well?" answered Ned. "I've been wondering what you were thinking about, Dolly."

"Oh, ever so many things," said Dolly, rousing herself and starting up Skatta, who had been ambling slowly along, into a brisk trot—"ever so many things—Skipper Joe's stories, and the Little Madam, and what Aunt Debby just told us about Great-grandma Marchant; and I've been wondering why books about people can't be just as interesting. Now, you know, Ned, 'Robinson Crusoe' is, and so 's 'Robin's Journal,' but history 's just stupid."

"Well, I s'pose *that's* history," replied Ned. "I heard Dr. Stone say, the other day, we were making history all the time, we Americans; an' that's the way we make it, I s'pose."

"The interesting parts never get into the history-books, then," said Dolly.

"That's so," replied Ned, emphatically, who had just begun Greek history, and hated it, though he liked Homer. He had found a copy of Chapman's Homer in an old chest in the secret chamber of the tavern, and had read it with great relish. He had never told Dolly about the book, nor about the secret chamber: he was keeping them for her.

As I said, they were on their way to Hemlock Island—to that part of it where the coal-pits were.

It was a mid-October day. A blue mist lay along the horizon. The golden-rod had faded, but the purple asters still bloomed by the way-side, and the oak and hickory were rich in crimson and gold. Great heaps of apples lay in the orchards, and the yellow pumpkins were piled in the corners of the cornfields. Their way lay through the fields—a well-defined roadway, but with numberless bars to let down.

"Say, Dolly," exclaimed Ned at last, impatient at having to dismount every other thing to let down bars, "let's leap 'em. Old Bill can do it, and I'll teach Skatta. Just look!" and giving old Bill a touch with the whip, he cleared the four-railed fence, and came down on the other side as lightly as a bird.

"Oh!" cried Dolly, admiringly. "Do you think Skatta could do that?"

"Uncle Malcolm wrote she was trained, and a saddle-horse isn't well trained if he can't leap a fence," replied Ned, as if he knew. "But you'd better try one rail first. You ar'n't afraid?" he asked.

"Afraid? not I!" answered Dolly, with a gay laugh. "Didn't Aunt Debby say I carried my head high like Great-grandma Marchant? and she wasn't afraid;" and she brought Skatta in front of the one rail, Ned having carefully removed the others.

With a slight leap Skatta went over, and as she

came down on the other side she tossed her head, as who should say, "What a *bagatelle* is that for a horse!"

"She's used to it," pronounced Ned; "and you did first-rate, too, Dolly; you didn't bounce a mite. Now we'll try two rails."

Skatta went over two rails, and Dolly pronounced it "as good as flying; and I sha'n't envy the birds any more after this, Ned." Then the three rails were tried, then the four, and Skatta proved the quality of her training by going over without a balk, and after that there was no more dismounting to let down bars.

As they rode in among the coal-pits, Skatta gave a terrified snort and began to back. She did not like the smoke, and the fire that was belching out from a hole in one of the pits frightened her.

"So, so, Skatta," said Dolly, patting her soothingly; "don't be a goose! it's only a coal-pit." And using a little judicious coaxing, she got her past the flaming pit to the farther side, where the smoke was less dense. As she passed the man who was tending the blazing pit, he looked up. It was an evil glance that he cast upon the two from under his ragged, dirty cap.

"What a dreadful man! Who is he, Ned?" asked Dolly, in a whisper, bringing Skatta up close to old Bill.

"I'm sure I don't know. A man always looks horrid, anyway, when he's coaling. 'Zekle can

tell you, I guess, if you want to know. Why, Dolly?"

"Seems as if I'd seen him before, Ned;" and Dolly shivered slightly.

This was not Dolly's first visit to the coal-pits. She had watched with great interest the whole process, from the building to the firing of the pits. Some of them were now almost ready to be coaled.

"They're dewin' fust-rate, mostly," said 'Zekle; "but that feller's makin' a mess o' his'n," indicating with a nod the man with the evil eye.

"Who is he?" asked Dolly.

"I d'no who he *is*, but I know he don't know nothin' 'bout tendin' a pit," replied 'Zekle. "He come here 'n wanted work, 'n said he knowed all 'bout coalin'. But he might 's well quit. Here, you!" he called out to the man, who turned surlily. "We don't care to keep *you* any longer. Y're jest sp'ilin' that pit. Burnt up more coal now 'n y're wuth."

The man threw down his hoe, turned upon his heel, and, before 'Zekle had time to speak again, disappeared into the thick woods that closely encircled the clearing where the pits were.

"Wa'al," said 'Zekle, "'f he hadn't b'en 'n sech a 'tarnal hurry I'd a-gi'n him a quarter, tho' he ain't 'arned a red cent." (Cents were cents in those days, not nickels, and *were* red.)

Dolly and Ned took dinner in one of the cabins. This had been understood at the tavern when they

left that morning. 'Zekle made coffee, and broiled pickerel fresh from Wintuxet Lake. This gypsy-like lunch was highly relished by Dolly. The potatoes were roasted in the ashes; and though much of the smoke which was expected to pass out through a hole in the roof lingered in the cabin, by keeping in a strong draught near the door it was endurable.

How cosey those cabins did look, to be sure, with their bunks filled with straw and their very primitive stone fireplaces!

"Coaling must be great fun," remarked Dolly, as she devoured a section of one of Thankful's plummy mince-pies.

"I guess you'd think so 'f you 's here once in a storm," said Ned, who in the past had entertained similar views of the delights of charcoal-making, and had been permitted by his mother to test them. "Door shut tight t' keep out wind and rain, cabin chock-full o' smoke, water pouring in through the cracks, straw sopping wet, an' old shanty shaking 's if 't might blow away any minute. Oh yes, it's great fun!" he concluded, ironically.

They lingered for some time about the pits, and then went down to the lake. Here they found the remains of a raft, built by Ned the preceding summer, in conjunction with several other boys. This they launched, and paddled about, barely escaping a ducking, and so it was well into the afternoon before they started for home.

Dolly had well fulfilled the injunction laid upon her by Aunt Anna to watch over the Little Madam. Rarely a day had passed since that time that she had not gone once at least to the vine-covered cottage. Ned often went with her, but not always; and Dolly, leaving Skatta to nibble the grass by the gate, would go in to nod and smile and talk as well as she could with the Little Madam over her boxes of mignonette, her bees, and her quaint embroidery; to cultivate a still more intimate acquaintance with the cockatoo, who now knew her well, and who no longer shrieked at the sight of Gaston; and to pet the white, blue-eyed Persian cat, while Gaston slept peacefully on the sunny door-stone.

The daily offering of the Little Madam in her office as hostess was usually a tiny square of honeycomb, dripping with amber honey made by her own bees, sometimes varied with a pink peach or a russet pear. Whatever it might be, it was daintily served on some delicate bit of India ware — another of Skipper Joe's gifts, who seemed to consider nothing too good or too fine for this little lady.

Meanwhile, Aunt Anna's solicitude in regard to the Little Madam's comfort and safety had not lessened. The rumors concerning her had gained ground. She was not only a Roman Catholic, who kept a cross with the crucified Christ upon it in her room, and worshipped this graven image con-

trary to the commandment, but her forgetfulness was all a pretence. She knew what she was about well enough. "She was a spy," said some; spying for what purpose, however, they could not definitely say. "A Jesuit, without doubt," one woman more learned than the others declared. "If she were not got rid of in some way she would ruin the morals and destroy the faith of the young, especially," said others. "And *what* was Mis' Park a-thinkin' of, t' let that child (Dolly) keep a-runnin' down there every day o' her life! Mark my words, Miss Periwinkle, she'll rue it — she'll rue it yit!" And Aunt Debby, to whom these words were addressed, "guessed Mis' Park c'd take care o' her own business, an' didn't want none o' her help."

But all this unfriendly gossip bore its legitimate fruit. Many who heretofore had been kind to the Little Madam, and had given expression to that kindness in words and in gifts, now stood aloof, and, like the Priest and the Levite, passed by on the other side. The more ignorant gave active expression to their dislike and distrust, and annoyed her in many ways. Especially did the children do this. Her grapes were stolen and the vine pulled up—the vine she herself had transplanted from its native woods. Her beehive was upset; and it is pleasant to chronicle that the boy who did it was badly stung; and the brown-eyed doctor, having to be called in, while he mitigated the sufferings of his patient, improved the opportunity of

administering both to the boy and his mother a homily on the duty of loving one's neighbor as one's self.

Once Dolly, arriving opportunely, found one of these boys fastening a cord around the neck of the blue-eyed Persian cat, with the intent to hang her. He was crouching behind the barn, where he thought himself completely hidden from observation, and was taken by surprise when Dolly fell upon him "tooth and nail," released the cat, and gave the young ruffian a sound cuffing. He did not forget the feel of her soft palm nor the look in her blazing eyes for many a day; and when Dolly, half ashamed, confessed her passionate outbreak to Aunt Anna, the latter said she had done just right, and needn't feel called upon to apologize.

So, as they came that day to the lane leading down to the Little Madam's, Dolly said, "It's late, Ned; but I must go down and see the Little Madam. I haven't seen her to-day."

"I wouldn't go to-night, Dolly, 'f I were you; no matter 'f you do miss a day," said Ned.

Dolly hesitated a moment. Then she turned Skatta's head decidedly. "Oh yes, I must, Ned," she said. "There's no knowing what those dreadful boys have done to her to-day. I sha'n't feel a bit easy if I don't see her. But you needn't come, Ned."

Dolly trotted off, and Ned rode slowly on towards the tavern; but just before he reached it he

turned his horse and galloped after Dolly, who was already out of sight.

As Dolly drew near the cottage she became at once aware that something unusual was taking place. On the low roof of the barn crouched the Persian cat, with every hair erect, and her tail bristling like a lamp-chimney cleaner, while the cockatoo was shrieking loudly within the house, "Go 'way! go 'way! Bad boy! bad boy!"

Dolly leaped from her horse and ran in, to find the Little Madam struggling in the grasp of a man, whom she instantly recognized as the one she had seen that day at the coal-pits—the man with the evil eye.

With a savage roar Gaston ran past Dolly, sprang upon the man, and seized him by the throat. There was a momentary struggle, a flash, a crack of a pistol, then the man leaped through the open window just as Ned rode up, and Gaston lay stretched upon the floor, with the blood pouring out from a wound in his breast.

Dolly stood for a moment as if dazed, then she threw herself down by his side, with a piercing cry of "Gaston! Gaston!" The brave fellow made one last effort to rise and to lap the hand of his beloved mistress, looked once at her with his human eyes, and then the faithful, loving heart was stilled forever.

After that first cry Dolly lay motionless, with her hands clasped around the dead dog's neck, and

her face buried in his shaggy hair, making half-inarticulate moans, pitiful to hear, Ned felt, as he came in and spoke to her and she did not answer.

"Oh don't, Dolly! don't!" he entreated. "Come home to mother." And he bent down and tried to loosen the tightly clasped hands. But Dolly made no reply, only lying quite still, with the low heart-breaking moans coming from her lips at intervals.

"Take care of her," he said at last to the Little Madam, "and I'll go for mother."

When Aunt Anna came she found her still lying there, with the Little Madam by her side tenderly caressing her, and the Australian cockatoo talking from his perch in the corner—"Poor Dolly! poor Polly! kiss Dolly! Gaston! Gaston! dead!" and then he gave a chuckle that sounded curiously like a sob.

"Dolly," said Mrs. Park, lifting her gently but firmly, "come with me, my dear; come home, and we will take Gaston too." At the sound of his name the flood-gates of her grief were opened and the tears came fast, with sobs that shook her whole frame. She yielded at once, however, to the loving command, and Uncle Harry carried her in his arms to the carriage and they drove home, with Ned following sorrowfully on old Bill, and leading Skatta.

'Zekle got out the express wagon to go for Gaston.

"Seems if 't 'd ought t' be the hearse," he said

to Thankful, as he put some clean straw in the bottom and laid a white sheet over it, which Thankful had brought for that purpose. "He's a sight humaner th'n some human critters I know."

"That's so, 'nough sight," replied Thankful, in her grimmest tone, and she looked black as a thunder-cloud in a sultry summer's sky.

Grief always had a singular effect on Thankful, and she forgot how often she had scolded Gaston for bringing in dirt on his big feet; but he had also had many a toothsome morsel from her hand, and they had been on the whole excellent friends. It was Thankful's way to give her friends an admonitory rap with one hand, while she held out some valued gift with the other.

"Now, Ned," she said, "'f you want t' do somethin' for Gaston, you c'n go 'n git some pine boughs 'nstead o' snivellin' there;" for poor Ned, utterly broken down with grief for Gaston and the distress of seeing Dolly's tears, was himself sobbing in the deep window-seat in the sitting-room, where he had hoped nobody would see him.

"Mis' Park wants him put 'n the parlor; an' we'll have things done decent 'f he *is* nothin' but a dog." And Thankful, slamming the door behind her, retreated to the parlor to make the necessary arrangements; and when 'Zekle and the other men arrived, bringing Gaston, he was laid tenderly on the fragrant pine boughs.

The next day he was buried in the little grass-

plot in Aunt Anna's flower-garden, and was missed and mourned by the whole household, but by none so deeply as by his beloved mistress, who refused to be comforted.

The spot where Gaston lay was shut in from observation by a trellis overgrown with the evergreen myrtle, and there Aunt Anna often found her, lying upon his grave and crying softly. She was becoming acquainted with Death, for we never really become acquainted with Death until he takes some one we dearly love.

"Do you think it is right for you to mourn so for Gaston?" asked Aunt Anna, one day, finding her there as usual. "Gaston was getting old, and some day he would have died."

"Oh dear! that don't make it a bit easier," moaned Dolly, as Aunt Anna knew very well. "I wanted him to live as long as I did, and now I shall never see him again — *never!*" and a fresh burst of tears followed.

Aunt Anna hesitated a moment before she spoke again. "Do you remember, Dolly, how our Lord said that a sparrow does not fall unnoticed by our Father? And it is not for us to say whether Gaston shall live again. Many wise and good men and women believe that life once given is never taken back. There is nothing in the Bible that forbids our believing that our beloved companions among what we call the brute creation shall live again. We have a loving Father, Dolly,

and we must trust ourselves and all we have to His keeping. He will never fail us." And Dolly, listening, was comforted, and from that hour could think and speak of Gaston with cheerfulness.

That night—the night after Gaston was killed—'Zekle passed at the vine-covered cottage so that no farther harm came to the Little Madam, and the next day she was transferred, with the blue-eyed cat and the white cockatoo, her boxes of mignonette and her old India ware, to a sunny corner of the tavern. Her bees were carefully removed to winter-quarters, and the dismantled cottage locked until spring, or until less troublous times should permit her return.

Dolly, meanwhile, was haunted by a feeling that, after some hesitation, she imparted to Aunt Anna.

"I think, Aunt Anna," she said, "that the dreadful man who killed Gaston was one of the thieves that tried to rob Uncle Harry."

"What makes you think so, my dear?"

"Because when he jumped through the window he looked just as one of them did that night when they jumped through the meeting-house window. And his voice, too, Auntie—he was swearing dreadfully at the Little Madam, and it makes me think of that night every time I think of him."

When Aunt Anna told her husband what Dolly had said, his reply was, "Very likely. But I don't see what he was after at the Little Madam's. She hasn't any money or anything of value

except her cat and her cockatoo, and a thief wouldn't be likely to want those."

And then Mrs. Park told him the latest gossip about the Little Madam; how it was rumored that she had a large sum of money concealed on her premises.

"Where do they think she got it, and what do they think she is going to do with it?" asked Uncle Harry.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Park. "There's no reason in such a supposition, of course. But who ever heard of a reasonable gossip!"

Who, indeed!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET CHAMBER.

As has been elsewhere intimated, Ned held a surprise in store for Dolly which he had been keeping for the right time; and now when he saw her dull, and moping for Gaston, he felt that time had arrived.

"Dolly," he said, one morning — there was a pouring rain and no going abroad on Skatta— "Dolly, come up-stairs, will you? I've got something to show you."

Dolly was standing by the window, watching the rain-drops chase each other down the outside of the panes, and pitying a robin who, having evidently made up his mind not to go South for the winter, was getting well drenched on his perch among the almost leafless branches of a cherry-tree.

She turned quickly at Ned's call.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Oh, more hist'ry," replied Ned, enigmatically. "Come on." And Dolly "came on" gladly, following him up the staircase in the rear of the big dining-room to the broad landing. This was the

oldest part of the tavern, and was very old indeed —for America—having been built about the year 1680. The other parts of the rambling old structure had been added at intervals, the last addition dating somewhere near the beginning of the present century. These oldest rooms had cedar walls and ceilings, and were panelled, with rudely carved flowers in the centre of the panels.

Ned stopped upon the landing and pressed his finger on what looked like a large clover-leaf, when the panel slid noiselessly back, revealing a closet-like room, into which he stepped, followed by Dolly, and closed the panel. This room was lighted by a narrow opening, screened from outside observation by the projecting eaves. It was empty, save for a small oaken chest, the brass lock and hinges of which were green with damp.

"Oh, Ned!" exclaimed Dolly, rapturously, taking in the whole delightful secret at a glance. "I never *really* believed in the secret doors and things in the 'Mysteries of Udolpho' before. They're splendid to read about and think true; but they must *be* true, for those old castles are ever 'n ever so much bigger than this house, and there's plenty of room in them for lots of secret places—O-o-oh!" and Dolly's evident delight was good to see.

"Mother says a good many old houses in New England have just such places. She's seen that one in Hadley where the regicides hid, you know."

"No, I don't know a thing about 'em. Who

were they?" said Dolly, impressed with such a remarkable display of erudition.

"The people who killed Charles I., of course," replied Ned, loftily. "They ran away to this country, 'n hid in a secret room in Hadley, an' nobody but the folks in the house knew they were there. An' one Sunday the Indians made an attack, an' the men rushed out of the meeting-house with their guns—they carried guns to meeting then—an' the Indians were getting the best of 'em, when out came one of those regicides and shouted to the white men to come on, an' encouraged 'em so they drove off the Indians. Then the regicide went straight back to his secret room. He had on a dressing-gown an' slippers, an' the people didn't know who he was, an' so they said 'twas an angel come down from heaven to help 'em—queer angel, in dressing-gown an' slippers, I sh'd think!"

"But I say, Dolly," he continued, lowering his voice mysteriously, "there's a story about this room too."

"Oh, Ned, you don't say so!" said Dolly, grasping his arm. "A real, dreadful, *true* story?"

"Yes, true 's I live and breathe. Didn't I say so—more hist'ry," he replied, much pleased with his success in diverting her mind from her grief. "An' there's another way to get into this room—look!" and he touched another clover-leaf, and another panel slipped, showing an entrance from the Little Madam's sunny room. They looked in.

The Little Madam was not there, but the cockatoo greeted them with a shout — "Halloo, my beauties!"

"The story 's about Grandfather Heath, when he was a boy, you know, in Revolutionary times," said Ned, closing the panel into the Little Madam's room. "His father was in the Continental army, an' there was a wounded spy hid in this room — an American spy, you know. He'd got away, an' the British were after him. An' they caught gran'pa one day when he was berrying with his sister, an' asked him questions till they found out he knew something, an' then they tried to make him tell—coaxed him, you know, an' offered him money; but he was true blue, an' wouldn't tell, an' then they tried to scare him. But they couldn't scare him either, an' then they just carried him off, an' his mother 'n sister didn't know where."

"Poor things!" said Dolly, with beaming eyes, divided between her sympathy for the sorrowing mother and sister, and her admiration for the pluck shown by her youthful grandfather.

"Well, they took him to headquarters, where the biggest officer was, an' he tried to scare him too, an' he couldn't. He *would not tell.*"

"Oh, wasn't he splendid!" broke in Dolly again.

"An' then they put him down cellar, an' in the night the loveliest lady came down an' wrapped him in her shawl—for he was a little fellow, you

know, only ten—an' took him on her own white horse an' brought him home, ever 'n ever so many miles, an' his mother was mighty glad when he burst into the kitchen, you bet! an' the lady gave him a ring to remember her by—a beauty, too, f' I've seen it, 'n mother'll show it to you some time, Dolly."

"And the spy was hid in this very room!" said Dolly, thoughtfully. "But what's in that chest?" she asked, suddenly.

"Oh, nothing but books," answered Ned. "There's where I found 'Robin's Journal,' an' another book I'll show you some time. It's poetry, but it's prime, if 'tis poetry."

After that day Dolly used frequently to press the big clover-leaf and enter that secret room. Sometimes she went to the Little Madam's room that way. The Little Madam, too, seemed singularly interested in this little room. Dolly "wondered" if she had not seen one before. The Little Madam was her ideal of a princess of Udolpho. Perhaps she had lived in one of those mysterious and delightful castles—who knew? who would *ever* know? Oh, if the Little Madam could only remember, could only tell, who and what she was! Well, well, Dolly! have patience, and you will know before long.

That night they talked it all over with Aunt Anna, as usual. As usual, I say, for the twilight talk was a fixed fact with which Mrs. Park rarely

allowed anything to interfere. That was the hour for confession, for sympathy, for loving confidence. Ned had his own special corner of the sofa in mother's room—the corner where headaches and heartaches, and all sorts of wounds of body and of spirit, had been treated by the same gentle yet firm hand ever since he could remember. And Dolly was given the other corner, with Aunt Anna in her low rocking-chair in front.

Dolly propounded what may be called "her theory of history," and Aunt Anna said it was a sensible one.

"I think," said that wise woman, "that the true way to study history is to begin with your own town, and then go on to your county, your state, etc., etc., till you have taken in the whole world. If *I* were going to teach children the theory of our government, I should begin with the town-meeting, and not, as many do, begin at the wrong end with Congress." But then, as Uncle Harry said, that was one of "mother's hobbies."

"I think that's a beautiful story about Grandfather Heath when he was a boy. I think it's beautiful to have *such* grandfathers and grandmothers as ours," remarked Dolly, with true ancestral pride.

"There is a pretty French motto, '*Noblesse oblige*,' and it means that those who are born noble must do nobly," said Mrs. Park.

"It was the motto of the old French nobility,

and very nobly did they live it, many of those who fled from France during the terrible Revolution. They left all their possessions behind them, and were very poor. But they would neither beg nor go in debt for food and shelter and clothes. 'No,' they said, 'we are French nobles, and we can do none of these things, but we can work and take care of ourselves.' And so they taught French and music and dancing and sewing. They did any kind of work they could get to do, and those delicately bred ladies did all sorts of household drudgery. They did not care what the work was if it was honest work. They wore old clothes because they had not money to buy new ones. But the old clothes were always neat. They patched and they darned, for though a French nobleman or noblewoman might wear old clothes without shame, they must not be slovenly. And they did all this with a brave cheerfulness, a self-respecting pride, truly noble. They were the *true* noblesse, you see. And that is what you must be, my Ned, and you, my Dolly. Take the motto of the old French nobility for yours. Feel that because noble-hearted men and women are your ancestors, you, too, must be noble in heart and in life.

"Scorn to do a mean thing. Be brave like Dorothea Williams. Have the courage of your grandfather Heath—moral courage. Dare to be truthful—dare to be honest—dare to be poor, if need be—dare always to do right."

Mrs. Park had half risen from her chair in her eagerness, and she now sank back and there was a moment's silence. Then she went to her dressing-table, and taking out a box, said, "Here is the ring the lovely lady gave my father." It was a somewhat heavy gold ring, in which was set a blood-red ruby. "And this," she continued, holding up a long string of gold beads, "this is Dorothea Williams's necklace." A small miniature in colors hung from the necklace, Dorothea's portrait. It was set in a locket of old red gold.

"This necklace and locket shall be yours, Dolly," said Mrs. Park; "and you certainly do look like her, as Aunt Debby said. Ned shall have the ring. You two are their only descendants, and whenever you look at these heirlooms remember the old French motto, '*Noblesse oblige.*'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOL AND ITS MASTER.

A FEW days after the twilight talk mentioned in the last chapter, the school opened for the winter. It had not been Mrs. Park's intention to send Dolly, but rather to give her lessons at home, yet the two seemed so unhappy at the prospect of a daily separation—for Ned of course must go—that she consented for Dolly to try it at least for a while.

It was a rather cold morning, the morning of Dolly's introduction to the school-house of the middle district, and the box-stove which stood in the centre of the school-room was red-hot, and as she went in, the teacher, Mr. Emerson, was just in the act of smothering Betty Potter's flaming gown, which, being of cotton, had caught fire as it touched the stove in passing. This stove stood in a box of sand, and the ceiling above it was spangled with innumerable stars—black on a white firmament—which stars Dolly thought at first were intended to be decorative. But she afterwards learned that they were purely accidental — that the scholars were in the habit of thawing out their frozen ink

on top of the stove, and not infrequently a bottle burst, hence the stars.

The school-room had been planned like most of the early New England school-rooms, in loving memory of the English schools of Eton and Westminster, where many of the immigrants from the mother-country had studied and played as boys. The desks and benches on either side sloped down to an open space in the centre, where stood the teacher's desk, and where recitations were heard. It was on a somewhat smaller scale than those famous English school-rooms, but after all was quite as comfortable. It was formerly heated by an open fire, but a few years preceding the time of which I write, that modern invention the stove aforesaid had been introduced. Since then the huge fireplace had served as a wood receptacle, wherein the pine and oak cord-wood sticks were piled far up the gaping chimney.

The school-house had never been painted inside or out; and while it was what an artist or a color-loving person would have called a lovely gray outside, inside the wood-work had mellowed into an equally lovely yellowish-brown.

Both desks and benches had been cut and carved by the innumerable jack-knives of generations of children, till you could not put your finger on a perfectly smooth spot. There were many initials, every boy especially having felt called upon to carve his on the desk he occupied, and it was not

unusual to find on the same desk a boy's initials with those of his father and grandfather, and in rare cases of his great-grandfather. The deep cuttings and carvings interfered with a boy's writing somewhat, if he chanced to be writing with only a single sheet of his copy-book before him; for when he came to "bear down," as Ned said, on the down stroke of a *y* or a *p*, "if he didn't look out his pen would jab right through the paper into a hole."

One feature of the school-room attracted Dolly's attention at once. Above the desks where the boys sat, pulleys were fixed to the ceiling by which the slates were drawn up at night and lowered in the morning, and after the introductory exercises down they came with a crash truly appalling to unaccustomed ears.

Dolly looked at Mr. Emerson wonderingly. Here was a new state of things. In the girls' school where she went in Boston the utmost quiet was enforced. Would Mr. Emerson permit such a racket? would he not speak? But Mr. Emerson was placidly turning over his text-books, apparently deaf to the noise of the falling slates.

In truth, the only one thing Mr. Emerson did insist upon was perfect lessons. He would shut his eyes and ears to any amount of roguery and mischief if only the lessons were thoroughly prepared. But woe to the unlucky idler or the stupid boy or girl! For such he had no mercy;

"idiot" was the mildest term applied to the latter. And after all, the results of this system were not bad, for a boy or girl cannot indulge in much roguery and have perfect lessons at the same time.

Mr. Emerson himself was a fine scholar who, as everybody knew, could command a better place and salary than that of master of the middle district school in Byfield. But he chose to remain for certain reasons, and the parents were only too glad to have him; and though the boys had bestowed upon him the pet name of "piggy," on account of his shrill, almost squealing voice, yet they had at heart the utmost respect for him.

A few days only after school began, Dolly had a chance to see how severe he could be with a stupid scholar. A great lout of a boy was up reciting in English grammar. He stammered along in his recitation, making blunder after blunder, while Mr. Emerson frowned and pshawed and hitched his chair restlessly about over the small platform, in momentary danger of going over its edge; and when, in answer to a question, the boy replied, "Grunters and liables," instead of "Gutturals and labials," Mr. Emerson's patience gave way, and with one prolonged hitch over he went upon the floor. But he was on his feet in an instant, and shrieking at the top of his voice, "There, I'm not dead yet, thank the Lord—but I shall be if that recitation goes on. Go to your seat, sir!"—he sent his text-book flying after the retreating boy.

So school was to Dolly neither stale nor unprofitable. Mr. Emerson's eccentricities amused her, and being a good scholar she did not fall under his displeasure. His sarcasm was at times truly terrible. How Dolly did pity big, awkward Betty Potter, when one day she came tumbling into the school-room after a romp at snowballing, loudly exclaiming, "Oh, how hot I am! how I do sweat!" and Mr. Emerson, turning upon her those awful spectacles of his, said in his most cutting tones, "Horses *sweat*, Miss Potter, and men perspire, but young ladies glow." Dolly's pity, however, might as well have been reserved, for Betty, not being a sensitive lass, only giggled at the rebuke given to her uncouthness.

In due time came the first night of spelling-school. Dolly had asked Ned if spelling-school was "nice," and he had replied with his usual formula, "Yes, jolly fun!"

The school-room was lighted on spelling-school night by home-made tallow-candles, dipped or moulded, as the case might be. As each boy and girl brought one, the illumination was decidedly brilliant. You who despise this method, and may question the truthfulness of my statement, must remember, however, that even in these days of gas and the electric light the winter palace of the Tzar of all the Russias is lighted with candles—of wax, to be sure; for as Theophile Gautier says, "Nowhere, save in Russia, does the bee still con-

tribute the illumination;" and light is the same, whether shed by a candle of wax or of tallow.

But in the matter of candlesticks there was great diversity. In this respect the middle district school-room failed when compared with the palace of the Tzar. He has gorgeous chandeliers and candelabra, while each boy and girl, with rare exceptions, was left to exercise his or her own ingenuity in providing candlesticks, or, to speak more exactly, candle-holders for spelling-school night. Many of these holders were made out of flat turnips and beets, and when cut in the likeness of roses or dahlias were really triumphs of art and quite pretty.

These vegetable holders were preferred by the girls generally, because they were easily cut, but as they had to be renewed each night, the greater part of the boys whittled out their candelabra once for all from blocks of wood. A very few, not disposed to do any work they could avoid, dropped a little melted tallow on the desk, stuck their candle into it, and the tallow, quickly hardening, held it upright. This last method, however, was frowned down upon by the authorities, as the candle, burning down, was apt to set the desk on fire.

None but members of the day-school were permitted to take part in the spelling-school, although any who chose could come as lookers-on, and many did so choose, both old and young.

Ned and Betty Potter were the leaders for that evening, and they drew lots for first choice; and the choice falling to Ned, he named Dolly, not only because he liked to have her next him, but, above all, because she was a first-rate speller. For, with all his pleasure in Dolly's comradeship, it is probable she would not have been chosen first had she not possessed the last-named qualification; for these spelling contests were hot and fierce, and the first consideration with each leader was to secure all the best spellers he could on his side.

The two lines of battle were soon formed, the poorest spellers being left to the last. These the first fire, as usual, brought down, and the floor was quickly cleared of all but the few good ones, who obstinately stood their ground. The championship was contested long and stoutly, till at last Ned was "floored," and only one was left on either side—Dolly and Betty Potter.

"Receive" was the word Mr. Emerson gave out next.

It was Dolly's turn, and she knew how to spell "receive"—of course she did—but was it *ei* or *ie?*

It is said, "He who hesitates is lost;" and whether true or not in morals, it is unquestionably true in spelling, as we all know.

Ei or *ie*—that was the question; and Dolly, whose decision must be made promptly, as it was one of the rules of the contest that there should be "no waiting," was just on the point of spelling,

having made up her mind to the *ie*, when Ned whispered softly but incisively, "r-e-c-e-i-v-e," and Dolly repeated it after him—not with any triumphal feeling, it must be confessed, for she knew at once she had no right to do so.

The next word brought down Betty, and Dolly was declared victor, and decorated with the pretty silver badge, which she was to wear till the championship should pass on to some better speller.

Both Dolly and Ned went home that night feeling extremely uncomfortable, although Ned tried to think that Dolly would have spelled "receive" all right, even if he had not whispered. But both avoided the subject with suspicious persistency, and talked about anything and everything but the spelling. They drank the hot ginger-tea which Thankful had in readiness for them, to keep them from taking cold, for it was her maxim that "a pint of hot ginger-tea before the cold is taken is better than a quart of salts and senna after." And then they briefly bade Mrs. Park "good-night," declaring there was "nothing to tell," and they were "dreadfully tired."

Nothing to tell! Dolly heartily wished there wasn't, as she tossed restlessly in bed, until she finally made up her mind to such a course of conduct as brought peace, and then she fell sound asleep.

The next morning Ned had a raging toothache, and his face was so swollen that he could not see

out of one eye, and his mother said he could not go to school, though he begged hard to be allowed to do so. He had reasons.

"Dolly, what are you going to do?" he suddenly asked, after studying her face attentively.

"Do? why, go to school, to be sure," she said, evasively, tying her hood, and pulling on a pair of sable-backed mittens that were the envy of all the school-girls.

"You know that isn't what I mean," remonstrated Ned, as well as he could, with one cheek feeling as though there were a cannon-ball in it. "Where's your badge?"

"In my pocket. And how should I know what you mean, Ned, if you don't say it?" And Dolly threw back a laughing, defiant glance as she ran out and closed the door behind her.

Ned groaned. "Oh dear! I s'pose I know what she's going to do, and I wish I was going to be there;" and he proved so "fractious" all the morning, that Thankful, as she assisted his mother in poulticing his swollen face, lost all patience, and said she "b'lieved 't do him good to go away 'n let him ache a spell." But Mrs. Park, with true motherly instinct, had divined that the toothache and swollen face, bad as they were, were not the sole cause of the fractiousness, and waited upon him and coddled him with infinite patience.

When Dolly came home to dinner she was as inscrutable as the Egyptian sphinx, and refused

to open her lips about anything but the ordinary school routine. But she looked very happy, and when Ned asked her if she still had the badge in her pocket, said, "No."

The next morning, the swelling having subsided, Ned went to school and heard the whole story.

Dolly had made up her mind, before falling asleep that night, that she would give the badge to its rightful winner and confess her wrong-doing. But the next morning she found it required quite as much resolution to stick to her decision as it did to make it. So all the morning, while at breakfast and on the way to school, she kept bracing herself up with those words of Aunt Anna's, "*Dare always to do right—dare always to do right.*" Over and over and over she said them. "It isn't so easy a thing to do, after all," she thought. "It's easy enough talking about it."

She waited until the close of the introductory exercises, and then raised her hand.

Now, Mr. Emerson was in one of his very worst moods that morning, and that is saying a good deal. He was a dyspeptic at all times, and he had taken for breakfast both sausages and coffee, either of which was enough to completely upset his nervous poise, and the two together had brought on a condition of things truly frightful.

As Dolly raised her hand he nodded fiercely. She went forward to his desk and laid the badge

upon it, saying, timidly, "I want to return this, please."

"What for?" he demanded, and the words came out like an explosive, and the glance he fixed upon her was hard and piercing as a steel blade. It was not encouraging.

"Because — because it doesn't belong to me," stammered Dolly.

"Why not?" he asked, waxing more irate with each question.

"Because I did not know how to spell 'receive,'" replied Dolly, in a barely audible voice.

"But you did spell it!" Oh, how the angry eyes flashed.

"But," said Dolly, hesitating now more and more between each word—"somebody told me."

"Who?" shrieked Mr. Emerson in most piercing tones, and laying his hand on the ferule beside him.

He was evidently "spoiling for a fight," as Cy Pratt told Ned afterwards.

Here was a dilemma that Dolly had not anticipated. She had not dreamed, when resolving to confess her own fault, that she would be bringing some one else into trouble, and that one to be Ned, of all others!

A moment she stood silent while she weighed the question—Ought I to tell? No, was the decision. I may and must confess my own wrong-doing, but I am not obliged to confess the wrong-doing of others.

"Who?" demanded Mr. Emerson again, bringing his ferule down upon his desk with a whack that made everybody in the room jump.

"I cannot tell," replied Dolly, firmly, but respectfully.

"Which means that you will not," he said, in a measured tone, more terrible even than his former shriek. He compressed his lips. "Do you mean to say that you will not tell?" he again asked.

"Oh, I can't," said Dolly, lifting up to his face a pair of pleading eyes that would have melted the soul of any mortal not in the grasp of a black dyspepsia.

"Hold out your hand," he said, taking up his ferule; and Dolly, without an instant's hesitation, held out her plump little hand, with its pink finger-tips, while she summoned all her firmness to meet the coming blow. She had never been struck in her life. "But somehow, Ned," she said, when she told him all about it, "I didn't care one mite about the blow. I knew it was a disgrace, but it wasn't a disgrace like acting that lie when I took the badge. I think, Ned, when that big ferule came down on my hand, I saw just how mean that lie looked."

But if Dolly did not mind the blow, its effect on Mr. Emerson was prompt and decisive. He raised the ferule for a second blow, then dropped it suddenly upon the desk.

"Take your seat," he said, sternly; "and you,"

turning to his gaping pupils, "take your books," and an unusual silence reigned in that school-room for the remainder of the morning session.

At noon he stopped Dolly as she was leaving the room.

"I wish to speak with you," he said; and when they were alone he continued: "I desire to ask your pardon for that blow, Miss Dorothea. I had no right to punish you for such a cause. I will not commend you for confessing your fault, your deception, for that was only doing right—doing what you ought to do; but the other involved no question of right—it was more a matter of honor—and no sense of right required you to betray the person who told you how to spell the word, and I sincerely ask your pardon."

Dolly was so utterly taken by surprise at this speech that she could only gasp, "Oh, please don't, Mr. Emerson. 'twas only just what I deserved."

As to Ned, great was his wrath when he heard Cy Pratt's version of the affair, but after hearing Dolly's he remarked, in a subdued tone, "Well, Piggy's a prime old brick, after all;" and feeling that he must have some vent for his emotions or burst, he went out and sawed and split wood till Thankful said "the m'lennium must be comin'."

The next day he made a manly confession of his own share in the affair to Mr. Emerson.

CHAPTER X.

THEIR FIRST QUARREL.

YES, Cousin Kitty has arrived. She has been looked for at any time from the first chapter of this narrative, and here she is at last, arrived in its tenth. "Better late than never," however, at least so far as Cousin Kitty's arrival is concerned, as Dolly herself would have told you, who fell in love at first sight with this new and foreign cousin.

Cousin Kitty has come from a region far away, if distance is to be measured by the time required to make it—and that would seem to be the fair way to measure space. She has come from England in a packet-ship, and has had a tempestuous passage, a seven-weeks' tossing on the boisterous Atlantic.

She is Uncle Harry's niece and Ned's cousin. She is not a cousin of Dolly's, but being Ned's cousin, Dolly claims a relationship, and Cousin Kitty gladly and graciously admits the claim.

Cousin Kitty is a young woman of twenty or thereabouts, and she went to live in England when she was six, and has, therefore, very vague ideas concerning her native land. Her father is a well-known London banker. She will stay in America

two years, and expects to learn a great deal about it and its people during that time. She stopped in Boston five days before taking the stage for Byfield.

"When I was in Boston I saw Scollay Square, and Bunker Hill, and the Common, and Daniel Webster," she was saying one day at dinner, soon after her arrival. "But I did not see the famous beauty, Emily Otis. I don't know but I wanted to see her more than the other things, but she was out of town."

"You'll have a chance to see her before you go back, without doubt, and she's probably as well worth seeing as anything you name, unless its Webster," replied Mrs. Park.

"Oh yes, we've heard about her in London. N. P. Willis went into raptures over her, and couldn't say enough about her beauty, and her graciousness, and her endless charms of mind and person," laughed Cousin Kitty.

"And for once, certainly, he could not have gone far beyond the truth," was Mrs. Park's reply.

"And is she so *very* beautiful?" asked Cousin Kitty. "Have you ever seen her?"

"Oh, I have!" put in Dolly, eagerly, "ever and ever so many times; and oh, Cousin Kitty, she *is* so beautiful!"

"Where have you seen her, Dot?" asked Cousin Kitty, who had bestowed a new pet name on Dolly.

"Why, at her own home, don't you know? I and her sister Marianne are very, *very* intimate friends."

"Then you are the very one to tell me about her," said Cousin Kitty, turning with great animation to Dolly. "You can't be envious of her because she is so much older than you, and you can tell me the exact truth. What is the color of her eyes?"

"A lovely dark, almost black."

"And is she tall?"

"Yes, tall like mamma."

"And her hair?"

"That is dark, too; a dark brown, and it gleams in the light like—"

"Oh!" interrupted Cousin Kitty, "*did* you ever see her dressed — really dressed — for a party, I mean?"

"Oh yes, many, many times; that is one of our treats, Marianne's and mine."

"Tell me about it; tell me how she was dressed."

"Well," replied Dolly, thinking a moment, "I remember one time especially, because Marianne and I were so impatient to see her, and kept running to her room—her maid was dressing her, you know—but she wouldn't let us in. She was going that night to a reception at Gardiner Greene's, on Pemberton Square—"

"Yes, I saw that place. There's a lovely green lawn in front of it," interrupted Cousin Kitty.

"And we kept teasing, an' by-an'-by she said, 'Now, girls, if you will only stay in the nursery till quarter before nine you shall come then and look at me to your heart's content.' And we did look at her just as long as we liked, and she was like a picture, only lovelier than any picture could possibly be, I think."

"Ah, Dotty, you might be her lover," laughed Cousin Kitty.

"And I do love her dearly," was the earnest reply.

"Tell me how her hair was dressed that night."

"It was dressed high up on her head, and she wore a big shell comb like one mamma has, and her front hair in little puffs, with curls behind her ears, fastened with side combs. But I don't think it was her hair, nor her shining eyes, nor her smiling mouth that made her look so beautiful, but something shining through."

"Dolly speaks better than she knows," said Mrs. Park. "Emily's lovely character gives the finishing grace to her marvellous personal beauty."

"Ah! how you excite my desire to see her, you and Dolly," said Cousin Kitty. "But you haven't told me how she was dressed. What jewels did she wear—pearls or diamonds?"

"She wore a white lawn gown with low neck and short sleeves," said Dolly.

"No jewels! Not a bracelet nor a necklace! Are you sure, Dolly?"

"*Very* sure."

"You must know, Kitty, that we in Byfield feel a special pride in her beauty; we claim a sort of ownership in her, in fact, as her mother is a native of this town."

"No, I did not know that."

"Yes, she lived in that old Revolutionary house I showed you yesterday. She was married young, and I remember her coming from Boston soon after, and how lovely she looked to my young eyes in a riding-habit of deep blue. She was an exceedingly handsome and graceful woman, but not so beautiful as her daughter Emily."

"I think nobody could be so beautiful as she," said Dolly.

"Percival has written a poem about her, beginning,

"'*Maid of the laughing lip and frolic eye!*'"

said Aunt Anna; "and when she was married, N. P. Willis wrote an absurd thing. It was a rainy day, and he said Nature was in tears because Emily Marshall had ceased to be a society woman and become a wife."

"Oh, when she was married—" began Dolly.

"*Did* you see her married?" eagerly interrupted Cousin Kitty.

"No," replied Dolly, "but I marked a pocket-handkerchief for her, and it was a part of her wedding-dress. She asked me to, but I couldn't find

any black silk fine enough, so I begged some of mamma's hair, which is black, you know, and I marked it with that, and she liked it. And then next day I helped cut the wedding-cake, and we children had great fun eating goodies and laughing; and in the midst of it she came in, and oh, Cousin Kitty, wasn't she lovely!" and Dolly drew a long sigh, as a lassie might after looking long at one of Fra Angelico's angels.

"Oh, you lucky child, you!" said Cousin Kitty. "I believe I should be almost willing to take to the nursery again to see her as you have."

"I know a woman in London," she continued, "who saw the beautiful Recamier in her prime, and she talks about her just as you talk of Emily Marshall."

"They were alike in one respect," said Mrs. Park. "They fascinated everybody, young and old, men and women, alike."

"Yes; and I am told the little ragamuffins of Boston followed Emily Marshall about and admired her, just as the little Savoyards of Paris did Madame Recamier," said Cousin Kitty.

"Oh, I do hope you will see her, Cousin Kitty," said Dolly, fervently, taking up her spoon and returning to the business of the hour—the eating of custard pudding; for time had flown while they had been talking, and it was already school-time.

And now let me tell you, just here, lest you may think Dolly's admiration of her lovely friend

exaggerated, what Josiah Quincy, who was himself a young man when Emily Marshall was in the pride of her beauty, says of her in his recent book, "Figures of the Past:"

"Centuries are likely to come and go before society will again gaze spellbound upon a woman so richly endowed with beauty as was Miss Emily Marshall. . . . She was simply perfect in face and figure, and perfectly charming in manners."

And I must also tell you what Dolly did not tell Cousin Kitty, that the handkerchief she marked was of a fabric so fine that it took a long time to do it; and said handkerchief was three-quarters of a yard square, and carried in the bride's hand, as was the fashion of the day.

In the mean time, Ned, not as yet especially interested in feminine beauty, had betaken himself to the kitchen, and Dolly not forthcoming at the proper time, he had gone off to school.

Dolly finished her pudding, spent some time looking for Ned, and when Thankful answered the look of inquiry she sent through the half-open kitchen door by saying, "He's be'n gone t' school this half-hour," it was then a good half-hour after school-time.

So she hurried into her "things," spending another five minutes searching for her mislaid scarf, and as she hurried she grew unreasonable.

"Why couldn't Ned have told me when he was going?" she said, impatiently, forgetting that it

was as much her business as his to look after the time. And as she trudged along alone over the half mile between the tavern and the school-house, she waxed crosser and more unreasonable, and when, as she opened the school-room door, she heard the last line of "John Gilpin," her vexation was complete.

Twice every week some member of the first class in reading was permitted to make a selection for the reading-lesson of the day, and almost invariably the choice fell on "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," by William Cowper. There were two good reasons for this. In the first place, "John Gilpin" was considered exquisitely funny; and, secondly, somebody had discovered that it could be sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne;" and Mr. Emerson, indulgent, as we have seen, in certain directions, permitted them so to sing the last verse. So, after the preceding sixty-two verses had been read "in turn," the whole school broke simultaneously into—

"Now let us sing, Long live the king,
And Gilpin, long live he;
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to see,"

singing with great vim and utter recklessness as to time and tune, but with the utmost enjoyment. It was always a "jolly lark," and to have missed it added the final straw to Dolly's displeasure and to her estimate of Ned's shortcomings. She took her

seat without once looking at him, as she would ordinarily have done; and Ned, waiting to give her a friendly nod, wondered, but concluded that she was in such a hurry, her geography lesson coming next, that she didn't think of him. But as the afternoon passed, and Dolly persisted in looking everywhere but in his direction, and, when school closed, hurried off with Priscilla Martin without stopping to speak to him, he began to wonder what was the matter.

He shouted after her, "Ho, Dolly! wait for me!" but she neither turned nor spoke. And he had such a jolly story to tell her, too, about 'Liphalet Taft! 'Liphalet was always furnishing jolly stories for their amusement; his blunders were so irresistibly funny! He lived in Turkey Swamp, with two old aunts, far from any other habitation. He first came out into the world when he was eight years old, and was stricken with terror at the sight of the town pump. A spring supplied the old aunts with water, and he had never imagined anything so dreadful as this creature, with its long arm and gaping spout. Would it eat him? and he utterly refused to go by it.

He was now twelve, and could barely read. Mr. Emerson had called him up, directly after the opening of the afternoon session, for a five minutes' lesson in geography. He had been trying for several days to infuse into his dull brain some idea of the tropics.

"Name *one* tropical fruit," he said at last, in despair.

"*Flapjacks!*" promptly answered 'Liphalet; which answer brought down the school in a burst of laughter, in which Mr. Emerson joined. 'Liphalet evidently had caught the idea that tropical fruits were the product of a warm place, and so said "flapjacks" at a venture. And Ned did so want to tell Dolly this story.

But Dolly did not make her appearance at the tavern till supper-time, when she greeted Cousin Kitty with effusion, and then fell to eating her bread-and-milk without looking at Ned. Mrs. Park saw that something was wrong, but, with a wisdom that it is a pity could not be more generally practised, said nothing. She shook her head slightly at Cousin Kitty, who seemed about to speak, and then they two went on talking about mutual acquaintances in Boston and elsewhere, and no notice was taken of the silent pair.

There was no twilight conference in mother's room that night. Ned went off to the barn, where 'Zekle was husking, and looked in only to say "Good-night" when it was time to go to bed. Dolly read "Robin's Journal," or pretended to, but Aunt Anna's observant eyes noted that the pages were very slowly turned, and the narrative did not seem to possess its usual absorbing interest. She went off to bed earlier than usual, and cried herself to sleep.

Foolish Dolly! *why* didn't she make up? Why, indeed. Why don't we always make up at once when we quarrel with those we love? Why do we keep on making their hearts ache and our own too? Why do we ever begin a quarrel, for that matter? It was a little thing that began this quarrel, but then, as a general thing, quarrels always do begin in little things. Give up? No, *never!* Let us stick it out, though it half kills us and the one we love too!

So Dolly, despite the tears and heartache, came down to breakfast the next morning resolved to keep up her cool behavior till Ned should do—what? Well, I don't think Dolly could have told exactly what she did expect Ned to do; but of one thing she was sure—she was going to make him feel as badly as she could.

And Ned, now thoroughly exasperated by Dolly's behavior, had resolved, on his part, to make no more advances. (He had passed the bread to her at supper the night before, meaning the act as a friendly overture, and she had taken a piece without looking at him or thanking him.) He guessed he could stand it as long as Dolly could.

So the two met in the breakfast-room with a cold "good-morning," for neither liked, in the presence of the family, to be guilty of the discourtesy of not speaking at all at this first meeting of the day. The breakfast went off very like the supper of the night before, the rest keeping

up an animated conversation, while Dolly and Ned ate in absolute silence.

Ned went off to school alone, and Dolly called for Priscilla Martin, and she and Priscilla got up the most surprising intimacy, promenading to and from school with their arms about each other's waists, and whispering together apart in the most confidential manner at recess. Now, Dolly had never liked Priscilla; and as to Ned, he "couldn't bear her," and never called her anything but "Pris;" and I am afraid that was one reason why Dolly made such a parade of their sudden intimacy.

At night the twilight talk was once more omitted, and Aunt Anna's heart ached for the two wayward creatures, who were evidently as unhappy as they could be; but she still kept her neutral position, and cautioned Cousin Kitty, who was inclined to try to persuade them to make up.

"No," said Aunt Anna, "it is better they should find their way out of this alone. They are both thoroughly miserable, and I want it to be a lesson they will not soon forget. I have questioned Thankful, and I do not think there is any really serious grievance at the bottom."

The next morning Dolly's resolution was somewhat shaken. She had passed a miserable night. She had been restless and wakeful, and when she had slept had dreamed of Ned. In one dream he was far up some steep height where she could not

reach him. In another he was sailing away in a boat, leaving her on the shore. In still another she was seeking him through a wild, tangled wood. She looked rather piteously at him when he came in to breakfast, and if he had shown the least sign of relenting, the quarrel would have probably ended then and there, for they were alone. But Ned only said "Good-morning," just as he might have said it to "Pris" Martin or anybody else that he hated, and walked up and began drumming on the window-pane, and Aunt Anna and Cousin Kitty coming in directly, the opportunity for making up at that time was lost.

Neither had much appetite for breakfast, and Dolly looked so pale and unhappy, Aunt Anna began to think she might be obliged, after all, to abandon her neutrality. Ned stopped at his third buckwheat, and asking to be excused, left the room, remarking casually, just as he closed the door, that he was going to look after his traps.

His traps! This was the way, then, he was going to pay her off! Dolly fairly choked as she tried to drink her mug of milk, but she made a brave and successful effort not to give way to tears. But wasn't it *cruel* in Ned to say that, when he knew how much she wanted to go! He was a cruel, cruel boy, and she hated him! And for a brief interval the spirit of evil took possession of Dolly.

Those traps he had set were not steel-traps, that

might catch some little creature by the leg and tear it frightfully; they were big box-traps, that would hold their prisoners firmly but tenderly, and Ned was hoping to catch a white rabbit for Dolly's own. Dolly knew just where that rabbit-trap was set, under a laurel-bush by the side of the brook.

It was only Thursday morning, and this was Saturday, that she went with Ned to set those very traps. How far away it seemed, and how happy they were that morning! How sweet the breath of the pine woods! how merry the flocks of chickadees in the oaks! What a pretty woodland carpet the trailing partridge-vine, with its scarlet berries, made in the sunny openings! And the feathery princess-pine and the trailing ground-pine, what loads of them they brought home! and together they hung them about the Little Madam's room. How good Ned was that day! (At this thought the spirit of evil spread its wings and made ready for flight.) How he helped her to climb up to the crow's nest in the tall pine! How good he was, anyway! Ah! Ned's goodness was a dangerous subject to contemplate in Dolly's then state of mind, and she quickly turned her attention to the apple-fritters which Thankful was heaping on her plate sympathizingly.

Dear, grim, crusty, tender-hearted Thankful! She couldn't bear, as she said afterwards, to see "them child'en makin' themselves miser'ble f'r

nothin'. 'F they only waited a spell they'd have plenty o' misery 'thout makin' it."

Ned got back from his traps a little before noon. He came back much subdued. He had not had a happy time. He had found nothing in his traps, and every step of the way he had seen something that made him think of Dolly. Here was where he fixed the stones for her to cross the brook. There were the white birches from the tops of which they had swung, climbing up to the very tip-top of the tree, then clutching it with both hands and swinging clear, while the supple tree bent till their feet almost touched the ground. How fearlessly Dolly had swung off!—she wasn't one bit afraid.

There, too, was the big pine they had climbed together, while he told her how once he went up that same tree for crows' eggs, and came down bringing one in his mouth because he had to use both hands in climbing, and when he jumped from the last branch the jar broke it, and it was addled —faugh! and how merrily Dolly laughed! She was a jolly girl, anyhow, and he liked her better than any girl he knew; and he wished she hadn't gone round with that hateful "Pris" Martin, and— "I'll go home an' ask her what's the matter, anyway, an' we'll make up, I guess."

And now I must tell you how they did make up their quarrel, and how droll it was that Skatta should have been the one, after all, to help make it up.

They were standing each by a window of the sitting-room. Aunt Anna, wise Aunt Anna, had gone out and left them together. Each was wanting to speak, and each was hoping the other would say something to break the ice.

Skatta was in the side-yard, where 'Zekle had turned her for exercise. She was prancing up and down, tossing her head, kicking up her heels, and investigating everything within reach of her nose. At last she espied the clothes-pin basket hanging high, with the Little Madam's blue-eyed cat curled comfortably therein, on top of the clothes-pins. That clothes-pin basket was a favorite resort of the blue-eyed cat. Skatta trotted up to it and put up her nose in a friendly way, but kitty resented the familiarity and returned Skatta's gentle touch with a vicious scratch. Skatta turned instantly, and lifting her heels, sent kitty and basket and clothes-pins spinning high into the air, and then trotted off with a satisfied whinny, while kitty landed upon the wood-shed roof, spitting furiously.

Then Ned and Dolly laughed outright, the ice was broken, and Ned, crossing over to Dolly's window, put his hand on her shoulder and said, "I say, Dolly, let's go this afternoon and look at those traps again." And Dolly replied, with somewhat "tearfu' een," "How good you are, Ned!"

And so ended their first and last real quarrel; and on the way to the traps Ned told her the "flapjack" story.

CHAPTER XI.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF SKATTA.

OLD Bill had been transferred (at Ned's special desire) from the stable to the stall beside Skatta, and one morning while they (Ned and Dolly) were taking care of their respective horses, Ned suddenly stopped his currying of old Bill, struck an attitude, and recited the following:

"And from their traces loosed
Their sweating horse, which sev'rally with headstalls they repos'd,
And fasten'd by their chariots; when others brought from town
Fat sheep and oxen, instantly, bread, wine, and hewèd down
Huge store of wood. The winds transferr'd into the friendly sky
Their supper's savor; to the which they sat delightfully,
And spent all night in open field; fires round about them shin'd,
As when about the silver moon, when air is free from wind,
And stars shine clear, to whose sweet beams high prospects and the brows
Of all steep hills and pinnacles thrust up themselves for shows,
And ev'n the lowly valleys joy to glitter in their sight,
When the unmeasured firmament bursts to disclose her light,

And all the signs in heav'n are seen that glad the shepherd's heart;
So many fires disclos'd their beams, made by the Trojan part
Before the face of Ilion and her bright turrets show'd.
A thousand courts of guard kept fires, and ev'ry guard allow'd
Fifty stout men, by whom their horse ate oats and hard white corn,
And all did wishfully expect the silver-thronèd morn."

Ned recited these lines from Chapman's translation of Homer as though he liked them and had read them a good many times, while Dolly stayed her brushing of Skatta's mane and listened with all her might.

"What is that? What a swing there is to it," said Dolly.

"Isn't there? That's what I like—the swing. It's the other book I told you I found in the chest in the secret chamber. I'll show it to you to-night." And so in the evening Ned brought out the big old folio, and spent an hour or so reading out to Dolly the parts he liked. It was during that evening that Dolly added another bit to her store of historical lore. Cousin Kitty had been peeping over her shoulder and reading scraps from Homer too when she said, suddenly turning to Aunt Anna,

"What a charming Penelope the Little Madam makes, with her eternal spinning, Aunt Anna! But where is her Ulysses? Is he never coming?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Aunt Anna.

"Ulysses!" and Dolly looked up. "What do you mean, Cousin Kitty?" for Dolly was always very much awake to anything that concerned the Little Madam.

"Oh, it's here!" was Cousin Kitty's reply, giving the huge folio a lift. "It's in the Odyssey—how Penelope spins and spins and waits for Ulysses, who has gone to the wars, and by-and-by he comes back and they live happy ever after."

"Oh, Dolly," she exclaimed again, suddenly—such a quick, bright, charming, birdlike way Cousin Kitty had—"I saw that beautiful picture of the spinning on Boston Common."

Spinning on Boston Common! Dolly looked puzzled. Surely she never heard of such a thing! When! how! What could Cousin Kitty mean?

"What! Did you never hear of that, Dolly?" asked Cousin Kitty, rightly interpreting her look. "Well, I didn't till I saw the picture, and then I hunted it up, of course. The Little Madam and her wheel made me think of it.

"It seems that, once upon a time, when our great-grandmammas were young, cloth was scarce in Massachusetts; so it was decreed by the powers that *were* that spinning should be done in every family. About that time, too, the Scotch-Irish came over from Londonderry, Ireland, bringing their pretty wheels for spinning linen, and a spinning craze set in; and they had a spinning-school in Scollay Square, or where Scollay Square is now,

and everybody, old and young, rich and poor, fell to spinning; and they even took their wheels on to the Common, and a charming sight it must have been, and a humming like a myriad of bees; and every woman and girl who could wore a gown of her own spinning and weaving; and some young girls had a spinning-match at the minister's house one day, and when they got through they had two hundred and thirty skeins of yarn, which they bestowed on the minister, lucky man!"

One morning as Dolly opened the door of the cow-barn, old Bill looked around and whinnied; but there was no greeting from Skatta's stall—it was empty!

It was early, and twilight still lingered in the recesses of the barn. Dolly drew nearer for a second look; it was possible the first look had deceived her. But no, the stall was certainly empty. She gazed about her helplessly. Old Bill whinnied again and reached out his nose, and the cows chewed their cud leisurely while waiting for the cowboy to turn them out into the sunny yard. They could tell her nothing.

She flew out of the barn, and meeting Ned, exclaimed, "Oh, Ned, Skatta's gone!"

"Gone where?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the distressed reply.

"She's somewhere about, I guess; we'll look her up," was Ned's consoling reply.

Ah yes—perhaps she had only strayed a short

distance, loosed her halter herself—the little mischief!—and gone in quest of the green pastures of last summer. The cow-boy, when he came to milk, doubtless left the door ajar. A little prancing, a brief tossing of the heels, and she would come to her mistress's call. So they went out and looked over the meadows that lay far and wide to the south and west, but no Skatta was to be seen.

Then they searched the barn anew. Perhaps she had strayed into an empty manger, and was hiding—the rogue!—as she sometimes hid behind a bush in the pasture when Dolly was looking for her. Or she may have leaped the bay for a taste of the sweet rowan. These possibilities Ned suggested by way of comfort, but in neither of these places was she to be found.

They looked under the barn where the sheep were kept; they even instituted inquiries in the hen-house and the piggery, but without avail.

In despair they went back to the empty stall, and there an ominous sight presented itself. The door of the harness-closet was open—the lock had been forced—the saddle and bridle were gone! There was but one conclusion to be reached.

"Somebody has stolen her," said Dolly, and Ned was silent.

"It's that dreadful man again, Aunt Anna," said Dolly, as she told her the heavy news—"the man that killed Gaston."

"That doesn't look reasonable, Dolly," replied Aunt Anna.

But when Aunt Anna came to talk with Uncle Harry about it, he said 'twas the only reasonable solution.

"If they'd really wanted to have stolen a horse, they'd have taken Suke or Dapple instead. Besides, there isn't another Shetland within fifty miles, and it's risky taking her—everybody knows her. Dolly's right; it's that fellow, and I'll do my best to get him, for there's no knowing what he'll be at next."

"But why should he have stolen Skatta if he doesn't want her, as you say," persisted Mrs. Park.

"For revenge," was Uncle Harry's reply. "The child has thwarted him twice, and such fellows are revengeful."

And Uncle Harry did do his best. Notices of Skatta's disappearance and descriptions of her were sent as fast and as far as was possible before the era of railroads and telegraph wires. Uncle Harry scoured the country far and near searching for traces of her; word was forwarded by stage to the police of Boston to be on the watch for a Shetland pony answering the description sent. A description of the supposed thief was also sent.

Every day the stage-driver was questioned for news of her, and all along his route people hailed him to ask if she had been found, and Dolly and her Shetland Skatta shortly became famous,

if fame consists in having one's name in everybody's mouth.

Everybody, too, learned of Gaston's death, and the attempt to rob the Little Madam, and of Dolly's escapade at the time of the convention. One maiden of thirteen, living in Quincy, even sent Dolly a letter—a delightful letter, too—which ran thus:

"MY DEAREST DOLLY,—I think your life is just like a story. Now nothing ever happens to me. My dog Gypsy is well and fat. Nobody tries to rob us. We haven't any queer Little Madam—oh, how I should like to see yours! I do quite envy you, having such romantic things happening all the time. My little brother got lost the other day, but we found him right away, and he was only asleep on one of the pigs. Nothing happens to us. I have longed, ever since I read the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' that something would happen, or I could see something horrid—like a skeleton or something, you know. But our house is spandy new, and there isn't even a dark closet in it. And somebody told me there's a secret room in your tavern. Oh, how lovely! Do you suppose anybody was ever boarded up in it, and died in it, as they did in 'Marmion?' Oh, it must be so interesting to live in a house with a secret chamber! It would make me crawl all over, nights, to think of it. Do you ever go into it alone? and

wasn't it splendid to get shut up in the meeting house? I should have *shrieked* if it had been me, I know I should. But papa says you are a heroine. I think it's lovely to be a heroine. But my brother Jack—he's an awful tease, and sometimes I get awful mad with him—says he never heard of a goose being a heroine. I wouldn't have Jack know I wrote this letter for anything. He would laugh at me so. But I felt I *must* write to you. It's almost as good as writing to Amanda Malvina Fitzwilliams in 'The Children of the Abbey.' Did you ever read that? It's sweet, but I like 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' better — it's more dreadful. I wish you would write me a letter. I should like to be your friend. I should like to send you my Gypsy. I love him, but I should like to give him to you to comfort you, because your Gaston was killed.

"Your very true and loving friend,

"PAMELA S. DRAKE."

Dolly had never heard of this little lady before, but she answered the letter. The offer of Gypsy quite touched her, but she declined the gift; and although Pamela S. Drake has nothing further to do with this story, the fact may as well be mentioned here that the friendship thus begun has proved a life-long one.

This was the only letter Dolly received on the subject, though doubtless, had postage been as

heap then as now, she would have had a peck. But letter-writing in those days was a serious business, and postage ran all the way from five cents to twenty-five for even short distances.

While Uncle Harry was scouring the country for traces of the thieves, 'Zekle and Thankful constituted themselves a home-guard. 'Zekle furbished up the big pistol dropped by the thieves on the night of the Whig convention, and cleaned and loaded his gun anew, while Thankful went to bed every night with the biggest carving-knife handy on the light-stand by her bed, after having searched more vigorously than usual under the bed and behind her gowns in the closet for the possible man. Everybody in and about the tavern, if questioned, would have confessed to being a trifle "nervous," but all, with one exception, kept a brave front. That exception was Betty, the farmer's bouncing daughter, who helped at the tavern on extra occasions, and who had been summoned to assist in the preparations for Thanksgiving.

Betty's apple-round cheeks and plump waist were no proof of courage, and she was quite as much of a coward as though she had been slim and pale. She saw a robber behind every door, and as to looking under her bed o' nights!—she dared not do it; but having undressed, with one wild leap she plunged into the depths of the feather-bed, and covering her head with the bedclothes, did

not emerge therefrom till peremptorily routed by Thankful at five o'clock in the morning.

Thankful delighted in sending her on various errands in the evening to remote parts of the tavern, and Betty would scurry timorously along with half-shrieks and little jumps, coming back all out of breath, sure she had seen a face peering in at a certain window, or heard a hand fumbling at a certain door-latch.

One evening Thankful sent her down cellar for apples.

"Harrington 'll be 'long 'n a couple o' days, an' I might 's well make a beginnin' on the mince-pies," said Thankful, by way of explanation.

(Harrington was the famous wizard who entertained so many generations of children, and who made a yearly visit to Park's Tavern, and exhibited in the dancing-hall.)

Betty did not dare to decline going down cellar, though her heart sank within her as she took a candle and she looked imploringly towards Thankful, who was cheerfully kneading dough.

'Zekle was busy examining his gun, which had kicked that day when he had fired at a flock of migrating geese; and had he not been so intent upon learning the cause of such behavior, he would have seen Betty's evident reluctance and gone down cellar with her; for 'Zekle did not approve of the tests to which Thankful was continually putting Betty's courage.

But he did not look up, and Thankful went on cheerfully kneading, and there was nothing for Betty to do but to obey the order and go down cellar for the apples.

The tavern cellar was as rambling in its way as the tavern itself. Underneath the principal stairway — there were three — was a dark cave, which terminated in an equally dark extension under the older part of the tavern. Betty never went down these stairs, even in the daytime, without feeling as though a hundred invisible hands were ready to catch at her ankles. This cellar was divided into rooms, and had arches for ashes, and arches for apples, and arches for potatoes, and for every other kind of a vegetable, each one apparently blacker and gloomier than the others. The arch which held the particular apple — the Holmes apple — which Thankful wanted was at the end of the cellar farthest from the main staircase, and the brick walk leading thither lay along a succession of these grewsome arches.

Thankful was still cheerfully kneading, and 'Zekle still intent upon his gun, when a piercing shriek arose from the cellar directly from under their feet; and in an incredibly short space of time — before they could reach the cellar-door, in fact — Betty burst into the room, shrieking, "I've seen him! I've seen him!" and sank into a chair.

"Seen him! seen *who?*" demanded Thankful,

shaking her vigorously, for she showed symptoms of hysterics.

"The thief! And oh, he grinned, and opened his horrid mouth, and gnashed his teeth at me—and—and—I think he had a tail!" she concluded, in a whisper, looking fearfully around.

"Don't be a fool!" said Thankful, contemptuously. "'Fraid o' y'r own shadder—a thief with a tail! Well, you *are* a gump!" and, disgusted beyond measure, Thankful went back to her kneading.

But 'Zekle questioned Betty: "Where d' y' see him, Betty?"

"In the flat-turnip bin 'n the shadder, an' I couldn't make him out first. I saw his eyes, an' I says to myself, says I, now, Betty, don't be scared 't nothin', an' then he give a kind o' a fling, an' I see his tail!"—lowering her voice and looking furtively at Thankful. "Oh, 'Zekle, he was horrid—*wus* than horrid!"

"Diabolical" was probably the word Betty was groping after, only she didn't know it.

Then 'Zekle said he "guessed he'd jest go down an' see f'r himself;" and taking his lantern and gun, he preceded Betty down the cellar-stairs; for Betty had no thought of remaining behind to be scoffed at, and—in modern phrase—to be set down upon by Thankful.

They went slowly and cautiously down the stairs and along the brick walk till they came to the flat-

turnip bin, when 'Zekle suddenly stopped. Yes, there were the eyes, sure enough!—sly, mischievous, with a spice of malice in them—peering through the darkness, and presently the grinning mouth opened, displaying a double row of sharp, white teeth. 'Zekle opened the door of the lantern and threw the full light of the candle into the bin.

"A monkey, by gosh!" he exclaimed, dropping his gun in his astonishment. Now, 'Zekle rarely used that expletive—hardly twice a year, in fact—and his doing so was expressive of extreme surprise.

The monkey, for it was a monkey, had on a scarlet coat and a scarlet-and-gilt cocked hat. He raised the latter politely, and, coming forward, held out his paw to 'Zekle graciously.

"Wa'al, I vum 'f th' critter don't want t' shake hands!" said 'Zekle, taking the monkey's paw. "He's 'scaped from th' menadgerī at Braintree. I heered 'bout it yest'day. Si Prince was down t' Braintree—saw th' richenceros, but th' monkey 's gone—couldn't git no track o' him nowheres; an' I'll be hanged 'f this ain't him, clothes an' all!

"Wa'al, Betty, no wonder you's scared. We'll jest take him up an' interduce him t' Thankful;" and 'Zekle chuckled as he anticipated Thankful's amazement.

They returned, Betty leading the way, carefully keeping 'Zekle between herself and the monkey;

for, never having seen one before, she did not place implicit confidence in 'Zekle's assurance that he "wouldn't hurt nobody."

"Thankful," said 'Zekle, as he opened the kitchen door, "let me interduce the thief; an' he has got a tail, sure."

The monkey, whisking by 'Zekle and Betty, doffed his hat with a low bow to the astonished Thankful, and then, his natural love of mischief getting the better of his artificial politeness, he leaped upon the table, snatched from the kneading-bowl the elastic ball of dough, and began tossing it to the ceiling and catching it.

It was impossible not to laugh at the creature's pranks. Even Thankful gave way, and the noise brought Ned and Dolly, together with Cousin Kitty, from the sitting-room, where they were having a romping game of blind-man's-buff; for Cousin Kitty was trying every method to cheer Dolly during the uncertainty concerning Skatta.

After some consultation, it was decided to chain their unexpected though not wholly unwelcome guest near the fireplace, to give him a mat upon which to lie, and an old shawl wherewith to wrap himself up.

"F'r they're cold critters, monkeys are," said 'Zekle, "an' sly, too—'tarnal sly." "Sly as J. B.," 'Zekle would probably have said, had he been acquainted with Dickens; but this was before the creation of the delightful "Dombey and Son."

Thankful herself went down cellar this time for fresh "emptins" for a new batch of dough, while Betty went off to bed, with the comfortable assurance that for once, at least, she hadn't been "scared at nothin'." Absorbed in this pleasant reflection, she forgot to make her usual leap and plunge, and so got into bed in a civilized manner.

CHAPTER XII.

NED TO THE RESCUE.

A WEEK had elapsed from the date of Skatta's disappearance, and every effort to find some trace of her had failed. Dolly was in despair, and both Uncle Harry and Aunt Anna had given up all hope of ever seeing her again, although keeping up a show of hopefulness for Dolly's sake.

It was on the afternoon of the seventh day, and Ned was sitting in the barn door, thoughtfully whittling.

"I don't see," Uncle Harry had remarked that day at the dinner-table—"I don't see how the fellow ever got off with her without anybody seeing him."

Had he got away with her? was the question Ned was now asking himself. Was it not possible that both he and Skatta were hidden somewhere not far away? Certainly it would not be a difficult thing to do, to keep himself and Skatta in hiding till such time as the search for her should be over. So Ned whittled and revolved these questions in his mind.

"That's it, I'll bet!" he shouted out at last, bringing his hand down upon his knee with a re-

sounding slap that made old Bill jump. The next minute he was on his feet, and thrusting his jack-knife into his trousers-pocket, he struck a bee-line across the old muster-field for the Little Madam's cottage. He came out into the winding lane just before reaching it.

What an atmosphere of peace seemed to brood over the little domain, lying so securely within its encircling pastures! The sun lay warm within the narrow yard. Close by the door-stone blossomed a pale-yellow chrysanthemum; but the crimson leaves of the woodbine had fallen, save one at the summit of the chimney, that fluttered in the warm south wind like the "one red leaf" in "Christabel"—

> "*The last of its clan,*
> *That dances as often as dance it can,*
> *Hanging so light and hanging so high*
> *On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.*"

Ned peeped in at a window. Some one had evidently been there since the room had been put in order under Thankful's careful supervision. A fire had been kindled on the hearth, and the ashes and brands had encroached upon the white scoured floor. A litter of straw in one corner showed where some one had slept. Ned tried the door: it was unfastened and he went in. Some of the boards of the floor had been lifted, and one was still out of place. Ned recalled the gossip about the Little Madam's hidden treasure. But there

was no sign of fire among the ashes on the hearth, and the bricks were cold. Evidently no one was making use of the cottage then.

He went out and stood a few moments on the door-stone. He took out his knife and stooped to cut off the yellow chrysanthemum blossoms.

"She will like them," he was thinking, remembering the Little Madam's love of flowers. But he drew back his knife. "No, I'll look for them," was his determination. "I'll wait till I come back." And then, with a deliberation and slowness that contrasted oddly with the headlong haste of his passage from the tavern to the cottage, he climbed over the fence into the pasture and made for the woods.

Following him, you would have noticed how he avoided every bit of open ground and kept close to the woods, choosing those of pine and hemlock rather than of the deciduous trees that, now the leaves had fallen, afforded less shelter from observation. He chose, too, the woods where the underbrush was thick; and as he went on, he examined cautiously and carefully every thicket, explored every hollow, stopping frequently to listen.

With these woods on Hemlock Island he was familiar. He had tracked them through and through many times when in pursuit of stray cattle or sheep. He had set traps in them, too. But that day he barely noticed the scolding squirrels that leaped from branch to branch over his head, nor

the rabbits that scurried across his path. Even the flight of a bevy of partridges failed to stir the hunter's heart in his bosom. He was in quest of quite another sort of game.

After about an hour of this cautious progress he came to the opening where the coal-pits were. He recalled the day Dolly rode down there so gayly on Skatta, with Gaston by her side. He paused and reconnoitred before venturing out into the open space. The cabins were still there, but the pits had been coaled long since and the coal carted off. Nothing remained to tell of that busy scene but the big black circles in the turf, which was still green as in spring with the late mild rains and the wash from the coal-pit bottoms.

The grass showed no sign of recent foot-falls, so Ned ventured forth and peeped into each solitary, empty cabin. There was the straw and the old quilts, the pieces of battered tin-ware and stumps of pipes, just as they had been left when the last load of coal was carted off. How still it was! Not a leaf stirred, not a solitary bird rustled among the branches. The utter silence of the place was oppressive; earth and sky seemed to listen.

Presently the cry of a flock of geese was heard. They were flying low, and wearily seeking a place to rest. As they neared Wintuxet Lake, a shot cut clear and sharp through the air and two fell swiftly, while the V-shaped line broke in disorder.

"Sportsmen," thought Ned. "*He* wouldn't dare to be firing guns."

As he turned away with a feeling of keen disappointment from the empty cabins, he thought of another place, still more secluded, where it was possible that Skatta and the thief might be hidden. This possible hiding-place was a good mile farther on, and away from home. The sun had already sunk low in the west, for these were the year's shortest days.

But Ned pushed resolutely on, for somehow, with every fresh disappointment he felt more and more certain that he was on the right track. He made his way through the thick underbrush and over the swampy tracts cautiously, as before. He crossed a tremulous piece of turf, about half an acre in extent, known as "the tilting ground." It bent under even his light weight at every step, and tradition said that under that springing turf was a bottomless pit of liquid mud, and that any one by chance breaking through would go on sinking till he came out, say, at Hong-Kong, China, or some other place at the antipodes.

But Ned did not mind the springing turf; he had never really believed the fabulous story, though he had told it to Dolly, and they had speculated together over the probable fate of any human being who might happen to break through. He had promised to show it to her some day.

Just as the sun had dropped below the horizon,

sending up a flight of golden arrows to the zenith by way of a farewell to the eastern world, Ned reached his destination. This was also an old coaling ground, though it had been years since any pits had been coaled there. The only time Ned remembered ever being at this exact place was about a year previous, when he went through this tract of woods with his father, in search of a pine fit for a ship's mast. At that time the coal-cabins were in a ruinous state; but on this day, as Ned parted the branches of a young pine and peeped out into the open space, his eye fell upon two comfortable cabins. The fallen slabs had been picked up and carefully nailed in place — there were the brown stripes in the turf where they had lain — and each cabin was thatched with branches of hemlock and white pine.

"Treed at last!" ejaculated Ned, under his breath, and this was all the outward expression of joy he allowed himself, though he could have danced a jig in sheer delight. He drew quietly back into the depths of the young pine, and reflected.

The situation was indeed a serious one. It was already sunset, as I have said, and were he to go home at once and carry the news of his discovery, the probability was that his father would think it unwise to attempt Skatta's rescue and the arrest of the thief before morning—and what might not happen between that time and morning? Before

sunrise they might both be far away. No! such risk as that was not to be thought of for a moment. He, acting alone, could not secure both, of course; but if he could only get Skatta, take her that night to her young mistress safe and sound — ah! he could see Dolly's shining eyes even through the gathering mists of the twilight as he thought of it. *That* was worth running a little risk for.

But how was he to do it? How was he, a mere boy, to carry her off with safety both to her and himself, from this daring, reckless man? He must plan with wisdom, and act with discretion and promptness. There must be the least possible risk of detection in the act. For Ned felt, and rightly too, that the fellow would not hesitate to fire at him, to kill him even, as he had done Gaston, if he thought the so doing were necessary to his own safety. Ned had accepted, as we see, without any reservation, Dolly's theory as to *who* the thief was —viz., the murderer of Gaston.

While he was casting about in his mind for a plan of rescue, a man stepped out into the opening from the woods on the opposite side. Ned recognized him at once. It was the man with the evil eye, whom they saw that day by the blazing pit, the man whom Dolly said had killed Gaston, one of the meeting-house thieves. He held a gun in one hand, and from the other hung a couple of dead geese. His was the shot, after all, that Ned had heard. He entered one of the cabins, and

presently smoke was seen coming out of the hole in the top.

"He's getting supper," reflected Ned. "Wish I had some! Going to roast one of those geese, I'll bet!" and Ned's mouth fairly watered at the thought. "Oh, dear! how hungry I am! Wish I'd thought to take a couple o' dough-nuts."

Ned's conjecture was right. The man *was* going to have goose for supper; for, leaving his fire to get well under way, he came out and proceeded to pick and clean one of the geese. A cloud of downy feathers hid him from view as he worked.

"What 'd Thankful say to such a waste o' feathers," commented Ned, as he watched the man with an interest that made him almost forget his own perilous situation. "Oh, what a fool! He don't know anything! he's no sportsman!" as he saw the way in which he mangled the plump, fat bird.

The process of dressing, or *undressing*—for why should we call the pulling off of all a bird's feathers "dressing it?"—was soon ended, and the man again vanished into the cabin. As he disappeared, Ned felt as though he would risk almost anything just for one peep, in order to see how he would cook the goose. "I should hang it before the fire with a string fastened to the top of the cabin," he decided in his own mind; for Ned was a born sportsman, and fertile in invention, as indeed most bright boys are, for that matter.

Presently the man, having arranged his goose to his satisfaction, came out and crossed over to the other cabin. A moment or two passed, and he reappeared, leading Skatta—for it *was* Skatta, though so covered with dust, so frowzy, with wisps of dry grass clinging to coat and mane and tail, as to look little like the sleek, glossy creature her mistress was wont to groom daily with such loving care.

She had apparently been well fed, however, for she pranced about gayly and seemed in the best of spirits, though she shied suggestively when the man raised his hand or came very near her.

"The brute's been abusing her," thought Ned, and his blood boiled at the thought.

The man led her to a spring at the edge of the woods, not far from the spot where Ned lay in a tangle of ferns, laurel, and white pine. At first she refused to drink, and held her head high, seemingly searching the woods with her soft, spirited eyes. The man swore at her and kicked her, and then she began to plunge and rear, but she subdued herself quickly, as though knowing it was of no use to rebel. Then she bowed her head and drank long and deeply, and as they were returning from the spring, again her soft, spirited eyes seemed to question the shadowy woods. Was she conscious that a friend was hidden there? Possibly.

She was led back to the cabin, and then Ned

waited and waited while the man ate his dinner and smoked his pipe. He could catch glimpses of him through the chinks in the cabin as he moved about in the firelight, and a delicious and tantalizing odor of broiling goose was wafted upon the night air to the nostrils of the hungry boy.

Ned had drawn up his plan; it was a simple one, viz., to wait till the man was sound asleep, and then make off with Skatta. It was tedious waiting, and he sometimes felt cramped, but he dared not move lest a rustle among the bushes —for the night was breathlessly still—might betray him. Once or twice he came near falling asleep, but he pinched himself awake.

The man occasionally came to the door and looked out, leaning up against the side of the cabin, and smoking in a contemplative manner. At such times Ned hoped he wasn't thinking about leaving that night; if he did, what was he (Ned) to do? To see Skatta carried off from right under his nose, as it were, he felt would be more than he could endure.

At last, however, after what seemed an interminable time, the fire in the cabin died down and all was still. Ned waited a good while even after that, curbing his impatience with the thought that if he should make a movement one moment too soon all would be lost. The time seemed to lengthen into a week, as he said afterwards, and how he did wish he knew exactly what time it

was! And what were they thinking at home when he failed to appear at supper-time? Well, he guessed he should surprise 'em when he did come.

At length he ventured out from his covert into the opening. It was a clear, starlight night; the moon had not yet risen. Ned looked up. How thoroughly comfortable and comforting was the sight of those familiar constellations, the "Little Dipper," the "Big Dipper," and Orion's dazzling belt! He had to pass close by the cabin wherein the man lay asleep. He stopped an instant and listened. He heard his heavy breathing, but even while he listened he turned restlessly in his sleep and groaned.

Ned slipped, silently and swiftly as a ghost glides, over the space which separated the two cabins and entered Skatta's.

"Skatta!" he whispered, warningly. He was in mortal terror lest she should whinny when she recognized him. Not she! She had not yet lain down, and she turned her head as he came up to her, and rubbed her nose over his head, his shoulders, anywhere where she could reach him.

He groped for her saddle and bridle. He could ride Skatta bare-back, with only her halter to guide her, if necessary, but he had no mind to do that. He would take her back to Dolly "all saddled and bridled" as she first came, if he took her at all.

Skatta stepped carefully to his leading, slipped her head promptly into the bridle, and would

doubtless have assisted with right good-will in buckling the saddle-girths if she could, for well she knew that the hour of her deliverance had come.

He then led her out, and mounted at once, to be ready for any emergency. He walked her slowly over the open space towards a wood's road which led into the country road, slowly and silently as possible, and it was only just as they reached that road that the thief, awaking, saw his prey escaping. He sent a pistol-shot after them, but it was too late.

"Now, Skatta," said Ned, "as fast as you please!" and the little creature, fresh from her week's rest, and turned towards home, literally flew over the ground. Part of the way, the last part, they took to the fields, the tireless Skatta leaping fences and ditches at full speed, doing herself, in her small way, as much credit as did Browning's famous Roland himself when he brought the good news from Ghent to Aix.

The moon was rising over the eastern pines as they passed the Little Madam's cottage, and as they dashed by, Ned gave a sort of a view-halloo as a vent to his so long pent-up feelings, and the man-in-the-moon seemed to beam upon him with more than his usual benignity. He did not stop for the yellow chrysanthemum blossoms. Oh no! *they* could wait. Seen in the white moonlight, they clustered like stars around the big flat door-stone.

A brief time and they had crossed the old muster-field, leaped the meeting-house fence, and were in the tavern door-yard, Skatta panting and with reeking sides, but whinnying most joyously as she caught sight of the waiting group there. For the whole family force was out—Aunt Anna and Uncle Harry, Cousin Kitty and the Little Madam, together with Thankful and Betty and 'Zekle and Skipper Joe, who had arrived that day—all shouting out a welcome and filled with wonder.

And there, too, was Dolly, flying up from her station by the guide-post, where she had been listening to the sound of the coming hoofs, which she had at once recognized as Skatta's, and upon whose neck she instantly fell in a mingled transport of tears and laughter. And just then the meeting-house clock struck nine.

There had been much anxiety at the tavern when supper-time failed to bring Ned. He had done such a thing once or twice in his life as to go off in company with other boys, fishing or trapping, without saying anything about it. And this time, perhaps, he had gone down to the lake for a shot at the geese and ducks, which were now on their passage south. So said Uncle Harry, and so they all tried to think; and they engaged in their usual evening occupations, or pretended to do so.

But Dolly had not been content to sit down and wait. Every few minutes she made a raid out into the road, and looked up and down for the missing

Ned; and at last she was rewarded by the sound of Skatta's swift-coming hoofs, and her joyous shout had brought out the whole family, as we have seen.

Skatta, after being duly patted and petted, was led off by 'Zekle, accompanied by Dolly — not to her old stall in the cow-barn, but to a more secure place in the stable; and Ned was taken in to supper, which Thankful, always practical, had kept hot and comfortable for him on the kitchen hearth.

He refused to open his mouth, however, about the rescue of Skatta, until Dolly, having seen her rubbed down, fed, and bedded, came in, and then he told them all about it.

And the next morning he and Dolly, once more in happy companionship on old Bill and Skatta, rode down and gathered the pale yellow chrysanthemums for the Little Madam.

CHAPTER XIII.

THANKSGIVING DAYS.

"IT'S just like another c'nvention," said Dolly.

"'Tis," was Ned's reply. "It's mother's c'nvention; the tag-rag-'n-bobtail c'nvention."

"Oh, what a shame to call it that!" remonstrated Dolly.

"'Tis," persisted Ned. "You just wait an' see! There'll be an awful spread, an' everybody that hasn't got anywhere else t' go will be invited to come here to dinner. An' 'f that isn't a tag-rag-'n-bobtail thing, I'd like to know what is!" and he conveyed a plump raisin to his mouth, into which receptacle had disappeared so many during the operation of stoning that Thankful felt called upon to remonstrate.

"'F y' eat many more o' them plums, th' puddin's 'll fall short."

"Oh, I'll risk that!" said Ned, and well he might; for Thankful, never submitting at any time to be "skinched," demanded such a supply of raisins for her Thanksgiving puddings and pies that it was difficult to crowd them all in; and looking at his operations from that stand-point, Ned might have

been considered as a happy provision whereby to make way with the surplus.

He and Dolly were stoning the raisins, of which the monkey—still unclaimed by the menadgerī—had managed to grab a handful by swinging dexterously down from his perch on top of the eight-day clock in the corner.

What a cosey, spice-laden, cheery interior was that kitchen on this evening of which I am writing! With the advent of cold weather the cook-stove had been removed permanently to the outer kitchen, while a roaring wood-fire burned nineteen hours out of the twenty-four in the huge fireplace in the inner kitchen. The remaining six hours the fire was raked up, dispensing a luxurious warmth even in its ashes.

On this evening 'Zekle, with Skipper Joe to "spell" him, was chopping raw beef and pork for sausages, which beef and pork required great strength of muscle to reduce to the fineness required by Thankful, who was as intolerant of a "chunk" of beef in her sausages as she was of a raisin-stone in her puddings.

The Little Madam was busy pounding and sifting spices, sticks of cinnamon, beads of allspice, and whole cloves; no adulteration in those spices! It was dainty, fragrant work, just suited to her, and done so neatly that not a trace of it powdered the white of her homespun woollen gown.

Cousin Kitty, leaving Aunt Anna to read her

favorite "Goldsmith," had deserted the sitting-room for the kitchen, and insisted upon having a share in the preparations for Thanksgiving. To her Thankful consigned the bunches of summer savory, sage, and thyme, to be carefully dried by the fire, and then powdered into shallow pans.

Betty, having reduced to a fine dust the meat for the one hundred mince-pies, was now engaged in chopping the apples, while Thankful went from one to another inspecting, suggesting, scolding, flying every now and then into the outer kitchen to stir vigorously two huge pots of pumpkin stewing over a moderate fire, stirring up at the same time the cow-boy, who had been stationed there to watch the fire, lest, burning too freely, the pumpkin should scorch, and who, between this responsibility and an overpowering inclination to fall asleep, was well-nigh distracted.

Upon this cheerful scene a traveller entered. The main entrance to the tavern was not through the kitchen, but two classes of travellers often came in that way—its old frequenters and strangers. The former knew well its comforts, and the latter were drawn thither by the light which streamed out so hospitably from above the short curtains which covered the lower half of the windows only.

But this traveller was no stranger. To all but Cousin Kitty his face was familiar. It was Harrington, the famous wizard. A pleasant stir greet-

ed his entrance. The monkey, after a careful survey of the new-comer, came down from his perch and cordially offered his paw.

"Ah, who have we here?" said the wizard. And then a strange wild cry was heard, which seemed to come from some mysterious and far-away region, and the monkey slunk back, trembling with fright. It was the savage cry of a bird of prey, a cry which the monkey had often heard in South American forests.

The wizard laughed, "It's too bad to frighten the creature," he said, offering him a bit of barley candy by way of a peace-offering.

Having laid aside his riding-coat, he took his stand on the hearth with his back to the fire and looked smilingly around.

"Going t' have snow?" he asked, looking at 'Zekle.

"Guess so," was the reply. "Geese 'r goin' over putty thick."

Presently, with the air of one quite at home, he moved across the kitchen, and stooping over Betty, who was chopping somewhat at random with her wide-open eyes fixed upon the wizard, he took an egg from out the apple in her tray.

"Well, Betty," he said, laughing, "is this where your hens lay?" And Betty stared in open-mouthed wonder.

"How 'd that come there an' I a-choppin', I sh'd like to know!"

Pretty soon a queer state of things prevailed in the kitchen. 'Zekle's chopping-knife disappeared while in the act of chopping, and after an ineffectual search, it was found in the tray under his very nose.

Dolly, dipping her hand into the deep stone jar for the last handful of raisins, withdrew it with a shriek, and out popped a tiny squirrel, which scampered up one of the wizard's coat-sleeves.

"Up t' y'r old tricks ag'in, Mister Harrington," said Skipper Joe, pulling his red silk pocket-handkerchief out of the pocket of his sailor jacket. A score of silver dollars followed the handkerchief and rolled over the floor.

"Had a successful summer, eh, skipper?" asked the wizard. "It isn't everybody that's got the dollars to carry about in that way."

"None o' mine," growled Skipper Joe, picking up one. "Lead, by thunder! Now just turn them into silver, Mr. Harrington, an' your tricks 'd be worth somethin'."

"Lead!" retorted Harrington, taking the dollar from Skipper Joe's hand, and ringing it upon the table. The clear, silvery sound proved the purity of the metal. "D'y' call that lead?"

"Wa'al, wa'al, reelly, now, 't's no use t' try tricks with you, Mr. Harrington," said Skipper Joe, resignedly. "Y' c'n make lead silver, an' silver lead."

The wizard looked smilingly at Dolly, who had been following his tricks with the deepest interest.

Just beside the cushioned settle where she and Ned were seated stood a light-stand, with a candle and snuffer-tray upon it. The candle had burned down, leaving a long wick, and Dolly took up the snuffers to snuff it. As she opened them, out dropped a fragrant red rose of the kind known as the monthly rose. She picked it up.

"Oh, Mr. Harrington, how lovely! I wish I could turn candle snuff into red roses! Is it mine?"

"With all my heart," replied the wizard. "The rose-queen must have sent it to match your cheeks."

"Perhaps she has some more for you," he added, mysteriously.

Dolly again tried to snuff the candle, and this time out flew from the open snuffers a canary, which, alighting on her hand, burst into song.

"Well, who ever see the beat o' that!" ejaculated Thankful. "How d'y' c'ntrive t' carry all them live creeturs about y' t' onct, Mister Harrington?"

"Easy enough if you only know how," was the reply; and Thankful was that instant confronted by a snow-white rabbit, which raised itself on its haunches upon the table and piped out, "Easy enough if you only know how."

"Massy sakes alive!" said Thankful, looking aghast at the uncanny creature as it sat motionless, with the exception of its long white ears, which

moved slowly back and forth. "Dew stop, Mister Harrington. 'Taint right—no, 'taint right—t' make dumb creeturs speak."

The rabbit chuckled, "Dumb critters can't speak. If they speak they aint dumb critters, and if they're dumb critters they can't speak." And having delivered himself of this bit of wisdom he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

Harrington laughed. "And now," he said, "I think I'll go and pay my respects to Mrs. Park." And he went out with the canary circling about his head, the monkey calling out just as the door closed, "Good-by! good riddance!" At least it seemed to be the monkey, although he looked as surprised as the rest at hearing a voice apparently issuing from his stomach.

"Wa'al, he's a master feller f'r a joke," said 'Zekle, as the door closed upon him, "an' it's dum queer how he does them things!"

"I' my way o' thinkin' them things 'd better be let alone," remarked Thankful, who had not quite recovered from her rabbit scare.

"Oh, pshaw! don't dew any harm, them things don't," said Skipper Joe, good-naturedly. "'F he rode on a broomstick now like a witch! They dew say old Granny Cary us't t' go t' Bermuda an' back 'n a night after rosemary to cure folks o' rheumatiz. Benev'lent old crittur, 'f she was a witch. But Harrington, now — Lor, Thankful, it's only jes' fun." But Thankful continued to shake her

head; she could not quite forgive Harrington for giving her such a start.

The day before Thanksgiving was a busy one for Ned and Dolly. Chickens, turkeys, puddings, pies, spare-ribs, sirloins, and assorted vegetables were to be delivered to Aunt Anna's numerous protégés: to the three old aunties, to bedridden Matty, to the McLouds, to the tailoress Phœbe, to crippled Susy Stone and her mother, and to Lute Atkins, a friendless drunkard, who lived alone in a half or wholly savage way.

It is always pleasant to be the bearer of gifts—doubly so, perhaps, when the gifts supply some real want—and Ned and Dolly had a happy time. The three old aunties were grateful, though not effusively so, for the thoughtful kindness that for so many years had helped them to make both ends meet out of a scanty income.

Poor Mrs. McLoud, with six hungry mouths to fill and only one small chicken for her Thanksgiving dinner, came very near crying for joy when Ned laid a plump, fat turkey on her kitchen table, with his mother's "compliments and kind wishes;" and as to the six children, they joined hands and circled around it in a sort of sacrificial dance, which Dolly, catching glimpses of through the window, thought very charming indeed.

Dolly did not go in at the several houses; she felt a little delicacy about witnessing the bestowal of these gifts. As they drew up by the gate of

Phœbe, the tailoress, she herself came to the door. Phœbe lived in a corner of Deacon Hart's house, in a state of happy independence, having "bought into" said house with her savings. "She wa'n't beholden t' nobody f'r a livin'," and no one except Mrs. Park ever ventured to offer her a gift. She prided herself on payin' her own way; and at the very moment that old Bill stopped at her gate she was busy in stuffing a five-pound turkey, which she had bought from the butcher's cart for her Thanksgiving dinner. But she had once been heard to say that Thankful was a "beater" for plum-puddings, and *she* couldn't come "nigh her." So for several years Mrs. Park had ventured to send her at Thanksgiving a small, round, crumbly, rich plum-pudding. Phœbe always graciously accepted it, and was "obleeged to Mis' Park," but some gift in return invariably found its way to the tavern, to take off the edge of the obligation as it were. Sometimes it was a basket of apples from her famous golden-sweet; sometimes it was a pound of equally golden butter from Whitefoot's cream. On that day it was a loaf of "riz" cake, made from the famous Waterman recipe, that had been in the family two hundred years—ever since the emigration of the family from England, in fact. It had been handed down from mother to daughter, and had been considered a strictly family inheritance, not to be imparted to any outsider. She handed the loaf up to Dolly, wrapped in a snow-white nap-

kin of home-made linen, with P. W. in cross-stitch in one corner.

"I think, Dolly, you had better go in and see Matty; she used to know your mother." This was what Aunt Anna had said as they drove away from the tavern that morning. So Dolly went in to see Matty, rather sorry on the whole that she must, for, she reflected, an old woman, bedridden for so many years, could not be a very nice person to visit.

They knocked at the door, and a cheerful voice saying "Come in," they entered.

"Dear, dear me! is *that* Matty?" thought Dolly, coming very near, in her surprise saying it out loud.

A woman was lying on the bed in a corner of the room, propped up by pillows. A small face was on the pillow, pallid, it is true, and encircled with snow-white hair, but luminous with a pair of laughing eyes that made Dolly's face fairly dimple as her own glance met them.

"Come here, my dear," she said, cordially, holding out a thin, white hand. "I know you; you are Helen Heath's daughter; I should know you anywhere. And I know what has brought you, Master Ned. And how you grow! Come and stand up here, and let me see how much you have grown since last year. Just look here!" and she pointed out to Dolly a row of pencil marks on the door-casing beside her bed. "I always make Ma-

hala scour round those when she cleans. That," pointing to the lowest one, "was his height when he brought me his first Thanksgiving turkey. He came tugging it in, in his short arms, with his mother behind, and how we laughed to see him!" and she laughed a low, happy laugh at the remembrance. "And he's brought me one every Thanksgiving since."

"Here's something else I thought you'd like, Matty," said Ned, bringing out, rather shamefacedly, a plump partridge, which he had trapped and dressed the day before, though, boy-like, he had kept his gift out of sight, and this was the first glimpse Dolly had had of it.

"Oh, thank you! and you left the pretty tail-feathers on for me to see, didn't you? And how do the woods look now? Are the box-berries thick? and is Wild-cat Brook as full as common? I used to love that brook when I was a girl; and sometimes in the night I think I hear it dashing over its stones. And does the little gray owl still keep house in the old apple-tree by the lane? I like to think of him there cold nights, warm and cosey, only I wish he wouldn't eat orioles and bluebirds. I don't begrudge him his mice. But just hear me! he's as much right to his oriole as I have to my partridge," and she laughed a laugh so heartily happy, so in contrast with her pale face and apparent helplessness, that Dolly, forgetting her good manners, stared in bewildered astonishment.

But such good spirits are infectious, and both Dolly and Ned were soon laughing heartily over her account of Mahala's mishap of that morning, whose pet lamb had butted her over as she was bringing in Matty's breakfast. Matty lost her breakfast, of course, or as good as lost it, for there wasn't another egg in the house, but she said the fun made up for that. And if she hadn't lost her breakfast, most likely she would have had no appetite for dinner, and now she could have broiled partridge, and that would be "nice."

And then they said "good-by" and hurried off to deliver the rest of their gifts.

"Is she really so sick?" asked Dolly, as they drove along. "And how can she be so merry?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Ned. "She's always just so when I see her. But mother says she has awful pain."

Ah, if they could only have looked in upon her at that very moment. For the sound of their departing wheels had hardly died away when a spasm of fierce pain contracted the delicate features, and a look of anguish came into the laughing eyes. None but the faithful Mahala ever quite knew how much Matty suffered. For, years before, when her happy girlhood went out in life-long anguish, she had resolved that "whatever I may have to endure, my sufferings shall never darken the lives of others."

What a dismal place was that where Lute At-

kins lived! All the traditional shabbiness and decay of the drunkard's home were there—if "home" it could be called — broken windows, hingeless doors, and falling fences. Ned knocked, but no cheerful voice said "come in." He opened the door, pushed in the basket, and shut the door quickly.

"He's there," he said to Dolly as he jumped into the buggy and caught up the reins. He shuddered with disgust. "It's dreadful to think that a boy can ever turn into a man like that!" he said. "An' mother says she remembers him when he was a nice, jolly boy. Well, I've signed the pledge, Dolly, an' I'm glad I have, an' I mean to keep it too. I b'long to a teetotal society. Oh, did I ever tell you about Johnny Tuttle when he was sick? He's a teetotaler too."

"No."

"Well, he was awful sick, an' he was going to die; that's what Dr. Stone said, an' that's what everybody thought. An' Dr. Stone said they must give him brandy every fifteen minutes, p'r'aps that would save him, an' p'r'aps 't wouldn't, anyway they must try it, an' Johnny said he couldn't take it nohow, for he'd signed the pledge, an' he was going t' keep it anyway. An' his mother cried an' begged him to, and his father begged, and doctor said he must, an' he said he wouldn't an' he didn't."

"And did he die?" asked Dolly, anxiously.

"No, you bet he didn't! Such a boy 's that

don't die easy! Why he goes t' school now, don't y' know? an' he's coming t' the menagerie—going t' be the elephant. Deacon Hart said 'f he'd been *his* boy he'd a-turned the brandy down him; an' he said 'twas tempting Providence, but father said 'twas true grit."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YELLOW SATIN GOWN.

A GOOD Thanksgiving dinner being assured to everybody within the limits of Byfield, the household at Park's tavern slept the sleep of the just on the night preceding that time-honored festival, and assembled in excellent spirits around the breakfast-table on Thanksgiving morning. The party was strictly a family party, and the principal dish was chicken pie, or pies rather, as there were two of them, and one was sweetened. Thanksgiving would not have been Thanksgiving at the old tavern without chicken pie for breakfast. Uncle Harry's father had always had chicken pie for Thanksgiving breakfast, and his father before him, and I was about to say that *his* father before *him* had eaten it, too, in Yorkshire, England. Doubtless the latter did eat chicken pie, for the English have always been famous for their rich pasties, but it could not have been *Thanksgiving* chicken pie, as Thanksgiving, we all know, is a Puritan festival, and had its origin in New England.

The two pies which graced Uncle Harry's breakfast-table that morning were baked in deep, wide

pans, and were so stuffed with chicken that the top crusts had taken on a pyramidal form. They were brought in steaming hot, with the gravy bubbling out of a hole in the apex of each pyramid, and bearing no slight resemblance to a couple of small but spunky volcanoes.

Uncle Harry had just inserted the point of the carving-knife into the sweetened pie, and was opening his mouth to inquire where Ned was—that young gentleman's place at the table being empty—when the door flew open and he appeared quite out of breath and bursting with news.

"The McLouds were all burned out last night!" he said.

There was a second's silence, such as usually follows the announcement of an unexpected and surprising bit of news, and then a volley of exclamations and interrogations was discharged at him.

"When? how? at what time? save anything? all safe?"

"About two o'clock. Mr. Emerson saw it first all of a blaze, an' rushed over an' got' em out in their night-clothes, all sound asleep."

"Children all safe, I hope," said Aunt Anna.

"Yes, though they like to have forgot the baby. Mr. Emerson pulled him out after the bed was afire."

An exclamation of horror burst from Aunt Anna and Cousin Kitty at this announcement.

"Didn't they save *anything?*—no clothes? nothing?"

"Not a rag," was the decisive answer.

"Dear me, that is hard indeed!"

Only six weeks before the father of this family had died, and his kind-hearted townsmen had been much exercised as to how, even with the house and bit of land which she owned, Mrs. McLoud was going to feed and clothe her young brood of ravens, the oldest of which was only ten, and here was an added complication.

"Where are they now?" asked Mrs. Park.

"At Aunt Debby's," replied Ned, chuckling. "I just saw 'em sitting 'round the breakfast-table, an' Aunt Debby an' Aunt Nanny fussing and clucking about like a couple of old hens with a new lot of chickens."

"Ned!" remonstrated his mother, but his father only laughed.

"Well," remarked the latter, "I don't see how they ever squeezed them all into that coop of a place."

"If Aunt Debby's house were as elastic as her heart, there would be no limits to her benevolence," said Mrs. Park. "But we mustn't let them eat her out of house and home. Thankful!" she called through the open door, and Thankful appeared, grim and expectant. "Just fill a couple of baskets, will you, and let 'Zekle take them over to Aunt Debby's. The McLouds are all there.

Put in another turkey, and anything else you think best. And oh, tell him to tell Aunt Debby I'll drive over after dinner and see about them. Perhaps we'd better let them go into the Little Madam's cottage for the present," she said, looking inquiringly at Uncle Harry, who was carefully dissecting the sweetened chicken pie. "There's plenty of old furniture in the garret we can take down."

"Just as you say," answered Uncle Harry, heartily. He never blocked the course of his wife's benevolence. He trusted her excellent judgment. Once, hearing somebody say that "Mis' Park's warm heart would run away with her yet," he had made answer, "My wife has a cool head as well as a warm heart, and I'll risk her."

Dolly had said "when" and "how" with the rest, and then suddenly lapsed into silence, and, with her eyes fastened upon the chicken's breast with its wish-bone, to which she had been helped, ate rapidly. But somehow the chicken had lost its flavor.

"We had just got them comfortably clothed for the winter," Aunt Anna was saying to Cousin Kitty, "and now it is all to do over again. Well, we must look over our belongings and see, not what we can spare, but how little we can get on with ourselves, and give them the rest. A woman and six children to clothe is no small matter."

"Oh dear!" thought Dolly, "I wish they would

talk about something else. They can have that old blue merino — I'd just as lief they would as not." But she did not say so aloud. She kept thinking of "something else." When Ned said, "Not a rag!" she instantly thought of that "something else."

That "something else" was a pile of five-dollar gold-pieces in a corner of the small drawer in her dressing-table. She rarely went into her room without opening that drawer and taking a peep at those gold-pieces. They were hidden under a pile of handkerchiefs. There were five of them.

Mamma had sent her that twenty-five dollars to do what she pleased with. That was what the note that came with the money said—"Do just what you like with it, darling. Buy what you please."

Dolly had been for some time making up her mind as to what she *did* want. She wanted a harp — Cousin Kitty could play the harp; but twenty-five dollars would not buy a harp. She had thought of a pair of pink coral bracelets. Dolly liked pretty jewellery, but she knew mamma did not approve of girls wearing it. But at last she had come to a decision.

There was to be a ball at the old tavern on the 22d of December, a military ball, and Aunt Anna had said that Dolly and Ned might sit up until twelve, at which time the turkey supper was to be served. Now, Dolly had known how to dance

almost ever since she could remember. She had been to the afternoon dancing-school, and once to an evening dancing-party that lasted till nine o'clock.

But a *ball!* The instant she heard about that ball she knew what she wanted to do with the five five-dollar gold-pieces. She would buy a new gown with it—a gown of that lustrous yellow satin that looked so much like sunlight. She at once took Cousin Kitty into her confidence, and Cousin Kitty said she had shown good taste in the choice of color.

"It will just suit your dark hair and eyes," said Cousin Kitty. "And I tell you what I'll do, Dolly. I'll write to Cousin Maud, and she'll get it for you. And those lovely yellow chrysanthemums of the Little Madam's will be just the thing to wear with it. She'll let us have them, I know. And you shall wear the biggest ones on your hair and skirt, and at the girdle, and I'll make a necklace out of the tiny ones—there'll be lots of blooms by that time, for they are all over buds—and you shall go to the ball as 'The Chrysanthemum!'" and as she concluded she had seized hold of Dolly, and they had *chasséed* up and down the long hall where they had chanced to be, in sheer delight over the idea.

And such a lovely idea! Dolly thought; every girl will understand how often she thought it all over, and how she imagined over and over again how she was going to look as "The Chrysan-

themum," arrayed in the gown of lustrous satin. It is the most natural thing in the world for a girl to wish to look pretty—why shouldn't she? So we can well imagine what a pang wrung Dolly's heart as something seemed to whisper to her, when Ned was telling about the burning out of the McLouds, "There's that twenty-five dollars! Give them that."

"It is altogether too ridiculous," thought Dolly. "There's that old blue merino, they can have that and one of my bonnets, and I can spare two pairs of stockings."

"But those are not yours to give," whispered the something again. "Those belong to your father and mother."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if Cousin Kitty had written to Maud to buy the satin, and so it's too late, anyhow," replied Dolly, defiantly. And the something ceased whispering, and Dolly finished her breakfast quite cheerfully.

Shortly after breakfast, however, to make everything sure, she asked Cousin Kitty if she had sent for the satin.

"No, I haven't," said Cousin Kitty. "I meant to have sent yesterday, but I certainly will to-morrow. There's plenty of time," she added, observing Dolly's fallen countenance.

Then the something began its work again, and managed to make Dolly so unhappy with its hints and suggestions, that, to strengthen herself in her

resolution *not* to listen, she went up and took a look at the gold-pieces, and then spent half an hour in the Little Madam's room, playing with the cockatoo and admiring the opening blossoms of the yellow chrysanthemums. The Little Madam was already pulling over her scanty wardrobe to see what could be spared for the destitute McLouds, and showed Dolly the beginning of a pair of white woollen socks for the baby. This wasn't, after all, an encouraging atmosphere, and she soon betook herself to the carriage-house, where Ned was setting up his menagerie.

"I'll tell you what 'tis, Dolly," said Ned, confidentially, "we'll ask five cents admission instead of one cent. And see what I've got on my sign;" and he took down a board whereon he had painted, in very black ink,

MENAGERIE OF WILD BEASTS.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE McLOUDS.

Admission, Five Cents.

"That'll fetch 'em, I guess," he said, complacently. "The fellows are going t' have a game of ball on the Green this afternoon, an' I shouldn't wonder if we took five dollars," hammering away at a hen-coop which he was converting into a wild-beast cage.

"'Menagerie' means a lot of wild beasts, anyway," said Dolly, petulantly, and beginning to hate the very name of McLoud.

"So 't does," responded Ned, good-naturedly. "But I can't help it now—can't print it over again. Took all my ink t' do that."

"It's only a good specimen of tautology," said Cousin Kitty, putting in her head to see what they were about.

"Of *what?*" asked Ned, with hammer arrested in mid-air.

"Of tautology, Ned. It isn't a wild beast—it's rhetoric. Did you ever read the 'Diversions of Purley?'"

"No, but it sounds good," said Ned.

"It's grammar," said Cousin Kitty, mischievously.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Ned, bringing down his hammer. He wasn't fond of grammar.

Cousin Kitty caught sight of the sign.

"Oh, that's a good idea, Ned," she said. "The poor things will need every cent they can get. And, Ned, I'll do something. Isn't there a place? Oh yes, there's the harness room; that's nice and clean, and has a window just right. I'll have something in there. Five cents admission, too. It'll be great fun!"

"What is it?" asked Ned.

"Oh, that's my secret—mine and Dotty's," laughed Cousin Kitty. "She'll help me, and you'll have to pay to come in and find out, Master Ned."

"All right!" answered Ned, cheerfully.

"And you must print me a sign to put over the harness-room door."

"Can't," was the laconic reply — "used up all my ink."

"Take a piece of coal," said Cousin Kitty, "and print in large letters,

"ART GALLERY.

"ADMISSION,

"*Five Cents, and a Promise not to Tell what you See.*"

"Oho! that's your game, is it?" said Ned.

"Why, of course. If those who went in first told, the rest wouldn't want to go in. And I shouldn't wonder if, between us, Ned, we got enough to clothe the baby, and the fun thrown in."

Then Cousin Kitty carried off Dolly to the Little Madam's room, where, with much frolic and laughter, Cousin Kitty explained her plan, and together they made out the programme, and got together their specimens of the fine arts.

The dinner-bell rang just as they had completed their preparations. So busy had Dolly been all the morning, that the troublesome something had not had a chance to get in even one whisper. But beginning to plume herself a little upon her forenoon's work for the benefit of the McLouds, it immediately whispered, "Well, what of that? What sacrifice have you made? you've had a good time." And Dolly, out of sorts again, passed into the dining-room.

Here were assembled what Ned had saucily called the "tag-rag-'n-bobtail c'nvention," and a very respectable convention it was as to size and quality. One of its members was Mr. Emerson, who was accompanied by his mother. Dolly had never before seen the latter, an eccentric little woman, who never went away from home except to the annual Thanksgiving dinner at the tavern. She wore a canary-colored silk petticoat, with a kind of blue short gown of the fashion of her girlhood, a blue shawl of another shade over her shoulders, and a pink necktie. She carried a large yellow bag, embroidered with purple flowers, and her Marie Stuart cap of white lace was surmounted by a huge red bow. The dear old lady looked so deliciously absurd that Dolly, meeting Ned's laughing eyes, could hardly keep from laughing outright.

"She's wore that same rig every year since I can remember," whispered Ned. "Isn't she a guy? and arn't she and Piggy a funny pair?"

Mr. Emerson was a devoted son to his queer little mother, who was "no fool," the Byfieldites said, but a remarkably shrewd, observant woman.

After the preliminaries—the carving, and helping each one of the numerous guests—the talk naturally clustered about the McLouds and their misfortune, and Dolly again suffered tortures as that impertinent and persistent something began its suggestive whispers. It was decided that the

Little Madam's cottage should be at once put in order for the homeless family. The furniture would be forthcoming from the tavern attic.

"But there's bedding—beds and sheets and pillow-cases and blankets and quilts," said Mrs. Park. "A body does not realize how much it takes to keep a family like that going till you come to fit it out with everything."

"I can spare a few sheets and pillow-beers, I think," said Mrs. Emerson, "although 'tisn't a question so much of what we can spare, I think, as 'tis of what we can get along without ourselves. I never did believe in giving away only what you don't want yourself—getting rid of things and pretending it's charity."

"I don't, nuther," put in Thankful, who was changing plates and looking after the wants of the Tuttle children, who, their mother being down with a fever, had been invited to eat their Thanksgiving dinner at the tavern. "My old mother used t' say, 'Give till y' *feel* it, then what y' give 's *wuth* somethin'.'"

The red bow on the top of the Marie Stuart cap nodded approvingly, and Dolly began to admit that it was within the bounds of possibility that she might give that twenty-five dollars, and give up the lustrous yellow satin. She sighed so deeply over her turkey at the thought, that Cousin Kitty, hearing her, whispered, "What's the matter, Dolly?"

"Oh, nothing!" replied Dolly, trying to smile, and succeeding only in producing a very watery smile, which Cousin Kitty attributed to the abundance of pepper on the turnip.

"Oh dear!" thought poor Dolly, "this is a dreadful funny world to live in, where, if you want to be good and happy, you've got to give up the very things you want."

"And there's shoes and such things," Mrs. Emerson was saying. "You've got to have money to get those things, and money's *skerce* with us."

"That is true," replied Mrs. Park. "When it comes to provisions, vegetables, and meat, we can most of us give something; and Mr. Trask (the keeper of the Byfield "store") no doubt will do his share. But, as you say, we've got to have money for many things."

"And just think," suggested that meddlesome something, "how much twenty-five dollars would buy. Wouldn't it be such a nice thing to do—to fit out that chubby little Archie McLoud with everything he needs?"

"He *is* a cunning little fellow," acknowledged Dolly; "but how *can* I give up being 'The Chrysanthemum?'"

And so the war waged in Dolly's soul between her good and bad angel—between selfishness and the love which never faileth. And when, the puddings and pies having been brought in, Ned called her attention to his plate, on which were six sec-

tions of pie, viz., custard, mince, pumpkin, cranberry, apple, and dried huckleberry, forming a complete variegated circle, she could not even smile; and as to appetite, she could not have eaten a morsel of even the plummiest piece.

After dinner she went to her room, half resolved to take the five gold-pieces out of her drawer and give them to Aunt Anna for Archie McLoud. She lifted the handkerchief and looked at them. How suggestive was their golden glitter of the sunlit satin! Just then Cousin Kitty called, "Dolly, Dolly, come!—it's time we opened our art gallery. The people are beginning to come." And Dolly, covering the gold-pieces with the handkerchiefs, shut the drawer and ran down to join Cousin Kitty, saying to herself all the way, "Oh, I can't! I can't!"

The art gallery was a success. Everybody who visited the menagerie paid another five cents and went into the harness room. Almost everybody, too, gave ten or twenty cents admission, and would take no change.

"No, keep it; it's for the McLouds," they said.

The game of ball on the Green was a semi-annual affair, played on Thanksgiving-day and the day of the April fast; and if the weather was fine a large part of the town, that is, of the masculine portion, were present, either as players or as lookers-on, and hardly any of the crowd failed to visit the menagerie.

They were admitted to the art gallery four at a time, after promising not to tell what they saw. Bursts of laughter issuing from behind the closed door, whetted the curiosity of those who had not been in, while those who had, laughed again. A few, it is true, came out looking bewildered. They belonged to those hapless folk who cannot see a joke. Here is the catalogue written out by Cousin Kitty to assist the visitors to the art gallery. If you are one of those hapless individuals who cannot see a joke, you will find little of interest or of wit in this catalogue. But if you have, as I trust, a sense of humor, you will appreciate Cousin Kitty's efforts, as most of her visitors did.

ART GALLERY.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS AND STATUARY

IN THE HARNESS ROOM

OF

PARK'S TAVERN.

NO EXPENSE HAS BEEN SPARED TO MAKE THIS COLLECTION ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY.

Connoisseurs declare that nothing like these artistic gems can be found, even in the finest European galleries.

1. View of Boston (*wood-cut*) . . . *A. Wheelwright.*
2. A Marble Group . . . . . *M. Clay.*

3. Mustered In and Mustered Out (*companion pieces*) . . . . . *G. Ullem.*
4. View of the Red Sea and Plains Beyond . . . . . *Unknown.*
5. Old English Lyre . . . . . *Lon. D. Ontimes.*
6. Lay of the Last Minstrel . . . . . *Hennessey.*
7. A Bridal Scene . . . . . *S. T. Able.*
8. Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine . . . *Sol. D. A. Gain.*
9. A Commentator on the Acts . . . . . *D. Seave.*
10. Cain and Abel . . . . . *Unknown.*
11. Things to Adore . . . . . *H. Ware.*
12. View of Cologne . . . . . *N. Farina.*
13. The Seasons . . . . . *C. Ondiment.*
14. The Drill . . . . . *Steele.*
15. Flower of the Family (*very fine*) . . . *Wheatleigh.*
16. One of the Constellations . . . . . *T. Inman.*
17. Alpine Scenery (*after Bierstadt*) . . *A. Carpenter.*
18. Last Hop of the Season . . . . . *Beers.*
19. Sweet Memories of Childhood . . . . . *B. Stick.*
20. The Skipper's Home (*a spirited scene*) . . . . . *Cheeseborough.*
21. Ho, for the Diggings! . . . . . *Farmer.*
22. The Last Shot . . . . . *Schumaker.*
23. Hart and Doe . . . . . *Baker.*
24. Wayworn Travellers . . . . . *Crispin.*
25. Handel's Bust . . . . . *B. Room.*
26. Little Indian . . . . . *C. Cobb.*
27. All Afloat (*a marine view*) . . . . . *Waterman.*
28. The Lost Heir (*a subject from Hood's poems*) . . . . . *H. Dresser.*
29. Village on the Rhine . . . . . *Cheeseborough.*
30. The Last of the Crispins (*wood-cut*) . . *Schumacher.*
31. The Light of Other Days . . . . . *T. Chandlers.*
32. The Old Mill . . . . . *C. Grinder.*

The menagerie, too, was a success. The monkey outdid himself, and went through all the performances to which he had been trained in his original menagerie. He posed as a dandy with a lighted cigar, and rode Skatta in a ring, leaping through a hoop which Ned had hung from the ceiling. It was with sorrow that his audience learned that he was to be returned to his rightful owners by stage the next day.

Johnny Tuttle made an admirable half of an elephant, of which Jimmy Trask was the other half, and the combined two moved about as clumsily and disjointedly as the real beast could have done. It was pronounced to be an admirable and accurate representation, in color and texture of skin, in trunk, tusks, tail, and feet.

There was a white rabbit in a cage, a weasel, a rat painted red, some blue-and-pink mice, and Johnny Tuttle's crow, who could talk like Mr. Emerson and cough like Phœbe, the tailoress, who was afflicted with a chronic cough. There was, at first, talk of adding the Little Madam's Australian cockatoo to the collection, but Skipper Joe said monkeys and parrots were natural enemies, and it would never do to have them together in the same room "loose;" they'd be sure to fight, and one of the two, if not both, would be killed. But the blue-eyed Persian cat was there, and conducted herself with perfect propriety, and was much admired.

Summing up the proceeds from the menagerie and art gallery, Cousin Kitty and Ned found they had nineteen dollars and seventy-three cents, "which will clothe the baby handsomely," said Cousin Kitty; "and I shall hereafter consider myself as a foster-mother to the little witch."

Through all the stir and interest and merriment of the afternoon, the meddlesome something had kept silence, but now it began to bestir itself, and whispered,

"Dear little Archie! What a pity somebody couldn't clothe him."

"Well, there's Aunt Anna and lots of folks. I don't see why I should give up something I've planned and want so much."

"But don't you *want* to do it? I don't believe you'd be half as happy going to the ball as 'The Chrysanthemum' as you would to see him in a cunning little suit you had bought for him."

And then Dolly began to think about Archie, remembering how one day she had found him far from home, picking buttercups by the roadside, and had taken him home on Skatta, and how cunning the little bareheaded fellow was, with his rings of curly black hair like a baby Bacchus.

And then she made a sudden resolution, and ran quickly up to her room, saying all the way, "I will; yes, I will! I will! I will!" snatched the pile of gold coins from the corner of the drawer, and running down again, thrust them into Aunt

Anna's hand, saying, "I'll give those to buy clothes for Archie."

Aunt Anna, who had known all about the gold-pieces and the plan about the yellow satin, looked astonished, and said, "Do you know what you are doing, Dolly?"

"Oh, please, don't say a word, Auntie! just take them," entreated Dolly, distressfully. And so Aunt Anna, understanding by intuition the situation, forebore to say anything more, having had herself, in former years, many a fierce battle with selfishness, and knowing how spent and sore such a battle often leaves the victor.

After Dolly got to bed that night she had a good cry, in which all regrets for the vanished chrysanthemum dream were washed away. She did not tell anybody about that battle, not even mamma. But years after, when she was obliged to choose a fancy dress for a brilliant party in London, she remembered that old dream, and went to the party as "The Chrysanthemum," in a gown of lustrous yellow satin, bordered with exquisite chrysanthemums and with ornaments of yellow amber. And then, for the first time, she told some one who had become even dearer than mamma, the story of Archie McLoud and the five five-dollar gold-pieces.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MILITARY BALL.

ON the night of the ball Dolly early betook herself to the "ladies' drawing-room," so called. This was simply the big spare room, or bedchamber. A fire had been burning since dusk in the fireplace, but a chilliness, mingled with a faint odor of smoke, still lingered in the atmosphere of the room. In one corner stood a huge tent-bedstead, draped with Indian chintz, upon which strange birds of brilliant plumage perched among still stranger and more brilliant flowers. The window and dressing-table draperies were of the same pattern, so was the covering of the great arm-chair in the chimney-corner.

I hesitate in telling you that this chair came over in the *Mayflower*. There is enough so-called *Mayflower* furniture in existence in this A. D. 1885 to have filled twice over a bigger vessel than that historic bark, whose tonnage, if I remember aright, fell considerably below two hundred.

But this chair did *really* come over in the *Mayflower*, and landed at Plymouth December 21, 1620, with the rest of the Pilgrims. It certainly looked ancient enough and battered enough to have been

in the Ark at the time of the Deluge, when Aunt Anna hid its age and shabbiness under the aforesaid Indian chintz, and stuffed it with the softest of live-geese feathers. It was a true Sleepy Hollow, and Dolly sank into it with a keen sense of luxurious comfort.

The interval of waiting was not long. She had snuffed the candles in the candelabra on either side of the mirror but once, when a jingling of sleigh-bells was heard, and directly after the door of the bedchamber opened, and a bundle of wraps, from out which a pair of china-blue eyes peeped, came in. The bundle rolled up to the fire, holding out a pair of mittened hands, and exclaiming, "Oh, it's dreadful cold, but the sleighing's gorgeous!"

Pretty soon the hands, getting warm, began to peel off sections of wrapper, as one gets at the heart of an onion—or, to use a prettier and more appropriate simile, the wraps began to unfold like the calyx of a flower, blossoming at last into a pretty little lady with light hair, pink cheeks, and china-blue eyes, and clad in gossamery white tarlatan, with low neck and short sleeves.

"Oh," exclaimed Dolly, with a sympathizing shiver, "weren't you cold riding in that gown?"

"Not a bit!" laughed Blue-eyes. "I was wrapped up so, you know, an' then we had lots o' buffaloes." (She meant carriage-robes.) "An' ma heat two bricks for my feet an' one for my hands. Si-

las says he'll have 'em heat again when we go home. Oh no—I wa'n't cold a mite!"

She then pulled off two long blue-yarn stockings, displaying a pair of pink silk slippers.

"Ain't they pretty?" she asked, putting them out for Dolly to admire. "Oh, I do hope nobody else won't have pink silk slippers! Silas got 'em for me in Boston. Silas goes to Boston real often."

Having carefully rolled up her wraps, she put them in a corner of the tent-bedstead, where she could get them in the general scrimmage for wraps that would ensue at the close of the ball, and then opened a round purple bandbox which "Silas" had brought to the door. It contained an assortment of artificial roses, mostly pink, which were to be disposed about her small person.

"Ma said I must have a bunch on my skirt where it is caught up, an' another right here"—indicating the edge of her low corsage—"an' some in my hair. I wonder if you could fix me?" she added, looking doubtfully at Dolly. "I expect Daisy ev'ry minute. I call her 'Daisy,' though her real name's Phœbe Ann, you know. She always fixes me, an' I fix her. But p'r'aps you'll do."

"Oh yes," said Dolly, cordially, "I'll like to do it. I sometimes help dress mamma. She says I'm almost as good as Norah—that's her maid, you know," and she took the roses and began draping the somewhat stiff tarlatan.

"Who is your ma?" asked Blue-eyes, "and don't you live here?"

"Oh no, I live in Boston," said Dolly.

"Do tell!" exclaimed Blue-eyes. "Why, I guess you're the little girl we heard about who is visiting here an' lost her pony, ain't you?"

"Yes," replied Dolly, beginning to feel the inconvenience of being famous. "But don't you think this wreath is too heavy for your hair? Let me put just one or two roses in your braids. There! now look."

Blue-eyes tipped her head first on one side and then on the other, and smiled at herself in the mirror, not a little vain of her rustic prettiness.

"Oh yes, I like that real well; they kind o' bring out the plaits, don't you think so? It took ma four hours to do those plaits, an' I thought I *should* die — I *was* so tired! But it pays," she added, smiling again at herself in the mirror.

Before Dolly had altogether finished Blue-eyes there was another entrance—a rush, an embrace, a sound of broken kisses, and then Daisy, *alias* Phœbe Ann, blossomed out from her calyx, a brown little lady, with brown hair and brown eyes, clothed in pink tarlatan, with low neck and short sleeves. She had a green bandbox containing white roses.

"Why, where's your wreath, Pansy?" she asked, in a disappointed tone. "We were goin' to fix our hair just alike, I thought."

"Oh, this little girl fixed my hair. She thought it looked nicer so, an' so do I. She'll fix yours just like it, I guess."

Blue-eyes, or Pansy, as we may call her now, was just sixteen, and to her, thirteen-year-old Dolly was still a "little girl." There's a vast distance between thirteen and sixteen—a good deal more than there is between twenty-five and twenty-eight.

So Dolly, ready to oblige and always liking to do that sort of thing, proceeded to "fix" Phœbe Ann's plaited brown locks, and before that was done there were more arrivals.

The jingling of sleigh-bells became almost incessant, and the door of the "drawing-room" only closed to open upon a new arrival. The room grew crowded, the bundles of wraps on the tent-bedstead multiplied, and there was a continuous chattering and fluttering, and mingling of rainbow tints, and a sweet odor of musk and rose as in a garden of blossoming plants. Half a dozen faces at a time were mirrored in the looking-glass, one above another, and the owners nodded and smiled at each other, and displayed their white teeth in joyous anticipation of the near pleasures of the ball.

Pansy and Daisy, having got "fixed" to their satisfaction, came and sat down on low stools upon the hearth-rug by the fire, and chattered like a couple of English sparrows.

"Silence Rose 'll be the belle o' the ball, I s'pose," twittered Pansy. "Nobody else has a chance when she's 'round."

"An' she's twenty-five, 'f she's a day. An' it's time she gave way to us young ones, ma says," returned Daisy, who had also reached the mature age of sixteen.

"Well, she *is* handsome," sighed Pansy. "Oh, there she comes now!"

Dolly looked with some curiosity to see this Silence emerge from *her* calyx. Her head was swathed in a cloud-like wrap of soft white wool, and from head to foot she was clothed in a garment of white fur. She was tall, and looked like a lily in her white wraps.

The calyx unfolded and displayed a slender young woman with jet-black hair, a complexion of cream-and-roses, and a pair of eyes of the soft brilliancy of stars.

A cry of admiring surprise, followed by a murmur of unqualified delight, accompanied the falling of the wrap of white fur on the floor.

"It's a military ball, you know," said Silence, with a comprehensive smile around the room, "and so I thought I'd come as the Daughter of the Regiment."

She had chosen the colors of our national flag for her dress. The skirt was of alternate stripes of red and white, the waist of blue, trimmed with scarlet bands and gilt buttons, while a cunning little

epaulet adorned either shoulder. On her head she wore the jaunty cap our Goddess of Liberty usually wears. A strap went over her right shoulder and under her left arm. There were thirteen gilt stars on this strap, and to it was attached a canteen, around the edge of which was printed in gold letters, "THOMAS ROSE, 1775."

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed the multitude. "Where *did* you get that, Silence? Isn't it cute?"

"My grandfather carried it in the revolutionary war," she replied, somewhat proudly, turning her head and stretching her neck to get a glimpse of it where it rested on the full skirt.

She then went up to the looking-glass and surveyed herself hastily, in an indifferent sort of way.

"Oh!" said the envious Daisy, "*she* can afford not to look at herself."

Just then the squeak of violins was heard from the dancing-hall, from which a single partition only separated the ladies' drawing-room. At the sound Pansy and Daisy hastily arose and began to settle their skirts; Dolly, too, sprang from the depths of the Sleepy Hollow, and there was a simultaneous preening of fine feathers.

"When you hear the fiddles begin to tune up, Dolly, you must start," Ned had said. "Just come up to the back door of the hall, an' I'll be there, an' we'll get in time enough to see 'em come in."

So Dolly slipped out from the room, and ran down-stairs through the long entrance-hall and

the dining-room, to the flight of stairs that led up into the L, in the rear of the dancing-hall. Ned was in waiting as he had promised, and there was just time to seat themselves comfortably on one of the benches that stood against the wall, and look about a bit, before the entrance of the dancers.

The walls of the hall were dazzlingly white, having been recently whitewashed, and were draped with flags and trimmed with evergreens, with which were mingled the plumes of the Byfield Light Infantry. These were tall, stiff made feathers of white, tipped with scarlet. Custom, of course, would not permit the wearing of these plumes at the ball with the accompanying box-like hat of shiny leather, decorated with a gilt eagle and scarlet tassels, so they had been put to this decorative purpose. The hall was lighted with the best of sperm-oil, in small globe lamps with tin reflectors. In these days of the brilliant and odorous kerosene, not to mention gas, the hall would doubtless seem dim, but it certainly did not seem so to Dolly and Ned.

"Oh," said Dolly, with a deep sigh of content, "it's perfectly lovely!"

The musicians sat on a platform built into a recess on one side of the fireplace at the upper end of the hall. There were three violins, a 'cello, a harp, cymbals, and a bugle.

"D'ye see that man with the bugle? That's Kendall," said Ned. "He's tip-top."

The players having at last brought their various instruments into harmony, struck into the first chords of the "Wood-up Quickstep;" and presently in swept the Daughter of the Regiment, led by a tall, handsome man whom Ned said was her brother, the captain of the light infantry. They were followed by the whole company in pairs, who moved up the hall, then across, and down past where Dolly and Ned were sitting, and so round and round many times, moving gracefully and slowly, with soft rustle of tarlatan and silk and muslin, and manly tread of soldierly feet, and bewildering color of scarlet and white and blue. The uniform of the light infantry consisted of white trousers with a scarlet stripe down the outside, and coats of blue, decorated with scarlet and gilt, a very effective costume for a ballroom.

At the very last came Cousin Kitty.

Cousin Kitty had brought with her to Byfield no ball-dress proper, and at first said she would wear a pale blue cashmere. But Aunt Anna had remonstrated.

"My dear," she said, "it will be a great pleasure for our young people to see you in full dress. We don't often get a glimpse of such elegancies here; not once in a lifetime, indeed. Besides, I'm afraid if you wear an ordinary dress they may take offence, and feel that you didn't think it worth while to 'dress up' for country-folk."

So Cousin Kitty had one of her party dresses

sent down from Boston—the very gown, in fact, in which she had been presented at the court of the good Queen Adelaide, which fact being whispered about the ballroom, caused her at first to be regarded with considerable awe, until it was ascertained that she was much like other mortals.

Her gown was of white silk with a long, undulating train, but with no garniture except the Little Madam's chrysanthemums, which, you may remember, Dolly had fondly hoped to have worn on this occasion, as an accompaniment to the yellow satin. She did wear chrysanthemums, as it was. She and Cousin Kitty had divided them, and very pretty they were, with her blue velvet frock for background.

Cousin Kitty's partner was not in military dress, but wore the usual full dress of a gentleman, and Dolly did not at first recognize in him the brown-eyed doctor whom she was most used to see driving at headlong speed behind his white-eyed racker, with a small trunk of medicines at his feet.

"How pretty Pansy looks!" said Dolly, as Blue-eyes went dimpling by with Silas, a diminutive, fair-haired young soldier.

"Pansy!" repeated Ned, scornfully. "Her name's Betsey Jane Bump. What geese girls are! —some girls, I mean," bethinking himself that he was talking to one of the "geese." "I'd knock a boy into the middle o' next week that called *me* 'Pansy.'"

"Oh, well, that's different," said Dolly. "Of course a boy wouldn't want to be called Pansy."

"Well, I shouldn't think a girl would, either, 'f she had any sense."

A cotillion followed the polonaise, and this was succeeded by money-musk, which in turn was followed by another cotillion, and Dolly found herself taken out by a tall, military gentleman, who was presented to her by her friend the brown-eyed doctor, and she danced her very best, while Ned looked on admiringly.

The Little Madam came in and formed a part of the group of lookers-on at the lower end of the hall, of whom Thankful was one and Betty's mother, who had come in to help about the supper, another. They had left the turkeys comfortably browning in the brick ovens while they took this outing.

"Wa'al," sighed Betty's mother, a stout, middle-aged woman weighing about two hundred and fifty pounds, "my dancin' days 're over. But I did use t' like it when I's a gal. An' I like t' look on now 's well 's I ever did."

"Wa'al, for my part, I never had no dancin' days," rejoined Thankful. "Never had no time f' caperin'."

"You don't mean t' say, now, Miss Makepeace, that y' don't a'prove o' dancin'?" asked Betty's mother, anxiously.

"I a'prove on't if anybody c'n do it," said

Thankful. "Look at Miss Kitty there! I a'prove o' *her* dancin'."

Cousin Kitty was dancing the Spanish Dance, in which she managed her long train so admirably as to call forth the unqualified commendation of her admirers at the foot of the hall.

"Dew see now!" exclaimed Betty's mother. "She jest giv' a kind o' a fling an' scooped it round quicker'n a wink! Anybody else 'd 'a' sot down on it."

"Wa'al, a young woman that's be'n t' a real court an' shook han's 'ith th' queen, an' jest as like's not danced 'ith th' king, 'd ough' t' know how t' manage the tail o' her gown!" said Thankful, with some asperity.

"Dew tell, now! Y' don't say so, reelly, Miss Makepeace! Be'n t' court! Wa'al, wa'al, this is new times f' Byfield!"

And so the winged moments flew by all too swiftly, and twelve o'clock, the hour for serving the supper, drew nigh.

"I s'pose we'll have to go to bed as soon as we've seen the tables," said Dolly, as she seated herself by Ned, flushed and sparkling from a "grand right and left" all around the hall.

"Yes, I s'pose so," replied Ned, discontentedly. "I wish we could have some turkey, but mother said only bread and butter. I say, Dolly, when I'm a man I don't believe I'll touch bread and butter. I'm just sick of it!"

"I don't care much about the turkey, but I do love the dancing," was Dolly's reply.

"Dotty," said Cousin Kitty, coming up just then, "will you run down and ask Auntie exactly the hour that supper is to be served? Doctor Stone would like to know. He is to visit a patient at one o'clock."

"Stay just there, Ned, and I'll be back in a minute," said Dolly; and she ran quickly down the long passage and the stairway leading to the outer kitchen, opened the kitchen door, and stepped into a pan of gravy which Betty, not expecting arrivals from that quarter, had left upon the floor. She had come down with such vehemence that she sent a shower of greasy drops over the floor, and, what was still worse, over her pretty frock of blue velvet.

"Oh! oh!" she cried out in dismay, withdrawing her foot well covered with "thickening." "I didn't mean to! I didn't know 'twas there!"

"Of course you didn't," was Aunt Anna's reply, who always took the sunny view of things. "I'm glad it wasn't hot, that's all. Just run to your room now, my dear, and change your dress. Lay it carefully by itself — we can take it all out, I think."

Dolly paused for only just one look around the kitchen, which was just then so full of steam from the boiling vegetables as to obscure the light of the many candles, each of which seemed isolated

in a little island of mist. Then she turned, by force of habit, to take what Ned would have called the "short cut" to her room—viz., that leading through the main entrance hall. As she opened the door of the great dining-room which led into this hall, however, she caught a glimpse of a group of gentlemen in military dress standing at the farther end.

No; that would never do! she could not go that way; she could not expose to the eye of any one she might chance to meet her gravy-bedaubed velvet. She paused, with her hand resting on the latch, to consider.

There was one other way — a way, too, where there would not be the remotest possibility of meeting anybody. That way led from the dining-room up the old flight of stairs to the secret chamber, thence through the Little Madam's room to the passage which passed by her own door. The Little Madam she had just left busy at mashing turnips in the kitchen, and the coast was clear in that direction.

So, leaving the dining-room, she groped along with outstretched arms through the narrow entry and up the dark stairs, making a slight noise as she stumbled once or twice over the unfamiliar steps; for though she had often gone over them in the daytime, when the light, though dim, was sufficient, she had never attempted to do so in the night. Having arrived, as she judged, at the pan-

el, she put out her hand in search of the magic clover-leaf—the "open sesame" to what she sometimes called her Ali Baba's cave—when she felt it seized by another hand, and she was drawn firmly but gently within the secret chamber, while a familiar voice hoarsely whispered, "'Sh! 'sh! don't y' make no noise! It's me, Dolly! y' needn't b' scared. I'm mighty glad y're come!"

"Why, 'Zekle, what's the matter, and what are you doing here?" asked the startled Dolly, suppressing by a hair's-breadth the scream that had rushed to her lips when 'Zekle touched her hand.

"'Sh! 'sh! don't make no noise! the critter 'll hear. He's right here, a-gittin' in t' the Little Madam's winder. I see him a-skulkin' 'roun', an' jes' kep' watch o' the pesky critter; an' he's a-walkin' inter th' trap 's innercent 's a weasel." And 'Zekle chuckled a very subdued chuckle, as befitted the situation.

"But who is it? Who's a-getting into the window?" asked Dolly.

"Why, the identikle vill'in that stole Skatta, an' killed Gaston, an' tried t' rob the squire; an' *this* time he's a goner."

"But where is he?" persisted Dolly, still slightly bewildered.

"Why, a-gittin' inter th' Little Madam's winder, didn't I tell y'?" replied 'Zekle, impatiently. "Jest look 'n here!" and he slipped the noiseless panel into the Little Madam's room, and Dolly saw the

thief by the window quite plainly, for the night was clear though moonless. While they were looking, he slipped out the pane of glass upon the setting of which he had been at work.

"There!" said 'Zekle, closing the panel. "Now you jest run an' git the squire here quicker 'n scat. He'll find that spring in a minute, an' I might manage him alone, an' then ag'in I mightn't." And while he was yet speaking, Dolly was off, flying with winged feet, utterly unmindful of the gravy-bedaubed velvet, in search of Uncle Harry, whom she found at last talking politics in the bar-room with some of the neighbors, who had sauntered in, as usual, to look at the dancing and partake of the good cheer.

She whispered just a word or two in his ear, and he immediately followed her out of the room. She had only said, "Oh, Uncle Harry, he's come again, and 'Zekle's got him."

But as they hurried along she told him who had come, and explained the situation, and he took down his musket in passing.

"Don't come any farther, Dolly," he said, peremptorily, as they reached the stairs leading to the secret chamber; and she was forced to obey, though fired with a sudden courage, and an intense desire to be in at the capture of her old enemy. She listened, however—she was not forbidden to do that. A few whispered words passed between Uncle Harry and 'Zekle; then there was

the sound of a window cautiously lifted, a muffled footstep upon the floor of the Little Madam's room; these were succeeded by a brief struggle, and then there was silence.

Presently Uncle Harry came to the door of the secret chamber, from which a light was now streaming, and peered into the dark depths below.

"Are you there, Dolly?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Just go and get Doctor Stone, will you? And don't tell anybody else."

Doctor Stone! Where was Doctor Stone? In the ballroom, of course. And how am I to get to him without everybody seeing me? And if everybody sees me, how can I keep them from finding out that something has happened, anyhow?

These were some of the perplexing questions that slipped through Dolly's mind as she half-mechanically made her way to the rear entrance of the hall, where she had left Ned, and where she hoped still to find him. There he was, with his eyes fixed on the door, momentarily expecting her to come in to report the exact hour for supper, and wondering what was keeping her so long.

She beckoned to him. "Ned," she said, holding the door open a couple of inches, "just tell Doctor Stone to come down into the little entry off the dining-room. Don't let anybody hear you tell him, and he mustn't tell and you mustn't." And having so spoken, she attempted to close the

door, but Ned was too quick for her: he grasped her sleeve, exclaiming,

"What's the matter, Dolly? How your eyes shine! 'Tisn't mother?" he added, anxiously.

"Nothing's the matter to trouble about; but oh, let me go! And do hurry, Ned! You'll know by-and-by." And shutting the door, she hurried to the entry, where it seemed ages before Doctor Stone appeared, although it was really only about two minutes. She explained at once: "'Zekle and Uncle Harry have got the thief that killed Gaston. He was getting in at a window, and they caught him, and Uncle Harry wants you."

Doctors are never taken by surprise, whether it's an earthquake or a fit, a revolution or a gun-shot wound. But they always feel safest when they have their remedies at hand; so the doctor said, "Oughtn't I to go out and get my medicine-chest?"

"Oh no, I don't believe it's that," said Dolly. "I didn't hear anything."

"Oh, but—halloo!" said the doctor, incoherently, "how did you happen to be there?"

"I wasn't there—only part way there," said Dolly; "and I mustn't go any farther," she added, as they reached the staircase.

"Well, this is interesting!" said the doctor. "Seems like the first chapter in a first-rate novel. I never saw this secret chamber before; heard of it, though."

Uncle Harry only wanted to consult with the doctor, as the most judicious person at hand, as to what disposal to make of the thief until morning, when of course he could be taken to the county jail at Plymouth. They had already tied his hands with a rope which 'Zekle had taken the precaution to have at hand.

"It's just as well to get the fellow off quietly," Mr. Park said. "I suppose nobody knows anything about it but you," turning to 'Zekle.

"I said nothin' t' nobody," replied 'Zekle. "Tho' 'f I'd had time when I see him a-makin' f' th' winder, I might 'a' got some help."

"Everything's so full here to-night, outbuildings and all, there don't seem to be any place to put him," continued Mr. Park.

"Put him in my office," rejoined the doctor. "'Zekle can keep watch over him, I suppose."

"I reckon he won't be likely to get away," was 'Zekle's grim response. "Here's his own wep'n," displaying the huge pistol.

So between them Mr. Park and 'Zekle led the thief out by a side door opening into the garden, and over to Doctor Stone's office, and neither the dancers in the ballroom, nor the busy caterers in the kitchen, nor the gossiping neighbors in the bar-room, got a hint of this comedy which had come nigh to being a tragedy, and the knowledge of which the next day stirred Byfield to its very depths.

The doctor stayed to replace the pane the thief had taken from the window, and then going home he laid aside his dress suit for his ordinary suit of tweed, and went off for a five-mile ride, to visit a patient dangerously ill with lung fever.

Meanwhile Dolly soothed the perturbed cockatoo, whose midnight slumbers had been abruptly broken by the sharp though brief struggle made to secure the thief.

"Oh dear! oh dear! Where is she? Where's my love? Kiss poor Polly—poor Polly—poor—poor—Pol—ol—ol—" and he was again asleep.

"I'll go to bed. It'll never do for me to see Ned. He'll get it out of me," Dolly was saying to herself, as she stepped out into the passage, and almost ran plumply into that young gentleman himself, who had been seeking her vainly everywhere.

"Good-night!" she cried out, hastily retreating towards her own room.

Ned made a plunge at her, attempting to seize her arm again, and only missing it by half an inch, and the next instant she was inside her room with the door shut.

He retreated from the field beaten and not a little sore. What *was* this wonderful secret, and he went off in search of the doctor. He was not to be found, neither was his father, and even 'Zekle had mysteriously disappeared.

He went to the dining-room, where his mother was superintending the taking in of the supper.

"Mother, what's the matter with Dolly?" he asked.

"She stepped into a pan of gravy," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"But she's gone to bed," persisted Ned.

"Well, I dare say she felt too tired to change her clothes," said Mrs. Park, absently, as she indicated to Betty where to place the last of a long line of vegetable dishes.

"Too tired!" reflected Ned, in disgust. "Why, not half an hour ago she was for setting up all night." And utterly baffled, he, too, went off to bed.

Here the slayer of Gaston, the thief, drops out of our story. He was tried and condemned to fifteen years' imprisonment on two indictments, viz., "assault and battery" and "breaking and entering." His doings were more than a nine-days' wonder in Byfield. He made no confession, but it was supposed he had been hanging about ever since the return of Skatta, waiting for a chance to get possession of the Little Madam's reported "treasure," in the existence of which everybody but himself had ceased to believe. He had fixed upon the night of the ball as a favorable time in which to make the attempt, with what success we have seen.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PUBLISHMENT IN THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE.

How Ned came to do such a thing will always remain something of a mystery. Mr. Emerson laid it to the account of the "general cussedness" of boys. But Mr. Emerson was fearfully out of sorts at that time. Whether it was the succession of Thanksgiving-dinners to which he had been invited, and of which he had recklessly partaken, or whether it was only a perennial visitation of his arch-enemy, the fact remains, that with the drawing near of the new year his dyspepsia had increased in violence, and his temper worsened in proportion.

Ned had got into scrapes before; he would not have been a genuine boy if he had not. But he had usually had "some regard for the decencies of life," as his father remarked in his wrath.

When he, with three other boys, dragged the Perkins's family carriage to the top of Crow Hill, and then coasted over the turf into the mill-pond, barely escaping with their lives, and leaving the ancient chariot soaking in its waters, people were scandalized. But Mr. Perkins having good-naturedly remarked that he was "glad the old thing

was at last disposed of satisfactorily," and at once entered into negotiations for a new carriage, they said, "Well, boys will be boys," and then forgot all about it.

Then, too, when he with the same boys made that memorable raid on Deacon Hart's watermelon patch, in which they were caught, and Ned was forced to expend all his allowance of pocket-money for three months to pay his share of the damage, the people in general sympathized with the boys. "Nobody ever expects to eat their own watermelons," they said. "Watermelons always get stole."

It was the same with that Fourth-of-July episode, over which the Byfield folks laughed so at Phœbe's expense. Phœbe, the tailoress, was a courageous woman, who liked to boast of her courage. Like another woman known in literature, she had been heard to say that she did not fear the face of "mortial man."

On this Fourth-of-July night — it was a dark, thundery night, following a thundery day — her boasted courage was put to a severe test. At twelve o'clock she was aroused by a knock at her door. The neighbors were in the habit of calling upon her in emergencies. She was a capable woman, knew just what to do for a baby with croup, or for a boy in convulsions from over-eating. It was no unusual thing for her to be called up in the night in this way.

She partially dressed and went to the door. She had spoken from the window at first, demanding "Who's there?" But at the instant she put her head out there had come a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a deafening peal, and she had drawn in her head without waiting for a reply; for, though not afraid of "mortial man," she had a slight dread of a thunder-storm.

So she hastened to the door, and, throwing it open, her light revealed a man standing a little one side—a man of remarkable height and breadth, wearing his hat well over his face, and carrying a small carpet-bag, a genuine *carpet*-bag of tapestry carpeting. He was standing at the foot of the three stone steps leading up to the door.

Phœbe said "Good-evening," and waited for him to speak, but he neither spoke nor moved.

"Well?" she said, at last, impatiently. But still no answer.

"Can't y' speak? what d' y' want? I can't stand here all night," said Phœbe, when, with a tremendous explosion, his head flew in pieces, his carpet-bag burst, and Phœbe, "scared t' death," as she confessed the next day, banged the door, bolted it, and waited till the first pale rays of daylight revealed the remains of the fearful apparition lying at the foot of the steps. These remains consisted of a suit of clothes of ancient make, which Phœbe recognized as the work of her predecessor in the tailoring business, fragments of a

hat, and bits of tapestry carpeting scattered over a large area. The clothes had been propped on rails, which accounted for the prodigious height of the scarecrow.

Bits of red paper betrayed the cause of the explosion, and Phœbe comprehended at once the joke that had been played upon her.

"It's some o' that Ned Park's work," she had said, smiling in spite of the chagrin she felt at being so frightened. For Ned, notwithstanding his pranks, was a prime favorite with her, indeed, if the truth be told, she liked him all the better for them. The hat as well as the carpet-bag had been filled with fire-crackers, and a fuse arranged to explode them at the right moment.

"An' I s'pose th' young rascals were hid out there somewhere laughin' at me," thought Phœbe, and her supposition was correct. They were hidden about six feet from the door, behind the rain-water hogshead, where they enjoyed to the utmost the success of their original firework piece.

But this last prank of Ned's which I am about to relate indicated a much greater depth of depravity, so some people thought—his father among the number. He was not alone in this nefarious transaction. He had an accomplice, none other than Johnny Tuttle, the hero of the temperance tale, who, my boy readers will like to know, was not altogether good—not too good to live, by any

means—and who, although a hero, was a fair specimen of uproarious boyhood.

At that time it was the law in Massachusetts that people intending marriage must have the banns read or posted in some public place. In Byfield they were usually posted, though occasionally read or "cried," as it was called. As, for instance, on one Sunday while Dolly was there, after the benediction, as the people were going out, the town-clerk arose from his seat in the gallery and announced the "intention of marriage" of Samuel Latham and Priscilla Weston.

The banns were always posted in the meeting-house. This old meeting-house, built in 1732, with square pews and diamond-paned, leaded windows, had been remodelled a hundred years later, and a spire and vestibule and porches added, the latter admirably arranged for nest-building on the part of mud-swallows, and as a lounging-place for the church-goers before and after service. In one corner of the vestibule, where you turned to go up the stairs to the galleries, the "publishments," as they were called, were posted, written on a slip of paper and fastened up with four tacks. The pair thus posted were said to be "published."

On Sunday mornings almost everybody, the young people of the congregation especially, cast a glance of inquiry into that corner as they entered, to see if there were any fresh publishments. There were often surprises, for engagements of marriage

were not announced then as now. People liked a little air of mystery to hang about these matters; they fancied too great publicity lessened their charm, as contact with rough winds spoils the tender grace of the rose.

On the morning of the last Sunday of the year 18—, a surprise awaited the church-goers in Byfield. The morning was clear and frosty, the sleighing good, and a more than usual number betook themselves to this last service of the year. At this service the pastor usually gave a sort of resumé of local events of the year, with the lessons to be drawn therefrom, and few cared to miss his pithy and apt teachings.

The first arrivals immediately espied a fresh bit of paper in the publishing corner. The sight was unexpected, for Thanksgiving-day, the day of family reunions, was also the popular day for weddings, and there had been no less than four on the Thanksgiving just past. People were not looking for another so soon. But the surprise of these first-comers deepened into the profoundest astonishment as they read of the intention of marriage between Hiram Emerson and Amanda Matilda Mortimer.

Who *was* Amanda Matilda Mortimer?

"Never heard her name before," remarked one. "Sly, ain't he?"

"Where upon earth did he find her? He never goes anywhere."

"Lovely times she'll have with him and his queer old mother!" remarked one spiteful soul.

"Oh, oh!"—running up to a fresh arrival—"who *do* you think's published?—Mr. EMERSON!" pausing to see the effect of her words. The effect was satisfactory.

"*Mr. Emerson!*" incredulously. "You don't mean it! I don't believe it!"

"Well, just go up there and see for yourself!" triumphantly.

The unbeliever went up and read the notice carefully, not then fully crediting even the evidence of sight. "Well, I *am* beat!" was her sole comment.

Meanwhile the crowd in the vestibule grew dense, for no one dreamed of going inside and seating herself while under the stress of this astounding bit of news. The report of it at last crept out into the open porches, where the men were discussing "swamping" and "milling" and the probabilities of a cold winter.

"Goin' t' git merried, eh?—Mr. Emerson? Wa'al, I'm glad on't. 'Tain't good f' man t' be alone," quoted Deacon Hart, who had been married four times. "Who's 't tew?"

"Well, I d'n' know," was the reply of his neighbor. "D' you?" he asked of the man next in line, who had told him the news.

"No, I don't. Who's he published to, Sam?" passing the question on; and Sam learns from a

roguish-looking girl at the door of the vestibule that the lady's name is Amanda Matilda Mortimer.

"It sounds like a hoax," said Sam to his right-hand neighbor. Sam had read "The Children of the Abbey" in his young and innocent days, and thought the name sounded familiar. "But don't say anything. The joke's too good to spoil. The boy that did it—it's a boy, I'll bet a dollar!—ought to have a leather medal."

"Mortimer!" echoed Deacon Hart, the name at last reaching his ears. "Never *heer'd* o' no Mortimers 'n these parts. Must 'a' come from York State, where his mother's folks be."

And so query and speculation, astonishment and laughter alternated, and two boys leaning over the railing of the stairs midway of the vestibule looked down upon the excited multitude, shaking at one moment with laughter over the success of their prank, and at another shivering with fear of its possible consequences, but it must be acknowledged that the laughter outweighed the fear.

The pastor, a grave and courtly gentleman, arriving, made his way in surprise through this chattering, giggling crowd, who, suddenly brought to the remembrance of the fact that the day was Sunday, and the service about to begin, hastily followed him in.

The two boys fled before the crowd of singers and others that came surging up the stairway, and betook themselves to the "niggers' seats," as they

were called, though at that time not one of the despised race for whose use they had been set apart lived within the limits of Byfield.

These "nigger seats" were in either corner of the gallery, square pews raised above the level of the gallery floor, and infested the greater part of the year with wasps.

From time immemorial the understanding had been that boys were not to occupy these seats during service. They might eat their pies and dough-nuts there at noon if they liked, but they were altogether too far away from the sober portion of the congregation to be a fit and safe place for them during service. These seats were entirely hidden by the galleries from the people in the pews below—the fathers and mothers—and as to the singers and players on violins, and the young men who habitually sat in the galleries—well, *their* conduct was not always above reproach, and they would be likely to view with a lenient eye any shortcomings on the part of the boys. Furthermore, by closing the doors of these "nigger seats," and dropping upon the floor, the occupants could be entirely hidden from everybody in the meeting-house, galleries included.

Yes, it certainly was a wise decision that had closed those seats to occupancy during service. And had not our two boys been utterly reckless under a sense of deserved and impending punishment, they would never have thought of breaking

this unwritten law. But remarking that "they might as well be killed for an old sheep as a lamb," they buttoned the door of the "niggers' seat" and abandoned themselves to the consequences.

The congregation having at last all gone in, there arrived in the vestibule, almost simultaneously, two men who belonged to that class of humanity that are always just a minute late — Mr. Emerson and the town-clerk. Mr. Emerson adjusted his spectacles at the right angle and walked up to read the publishment. So taken by surprise was he that he did not at first reading comprehend that he was the Hiram Emerson announced therein as intending marriage. He was reading it a second time when the town-clerk came up.

"Halloo! what's that?" he said. He was equally surprised to find a notice of which he knew nothing posted in his special corner.

"You ought to know, if anybody," was the reply.

"Well, 'tain't signed," said the town-clerk, who at once noticed a defect that had apparently escaped the observation of those who had read it.

"Who's Amanda Matilda Mortimer, anyhow?" he asked, looking suspiciously at Mr. Emerson.

"Hanged 'f I know!" was the reply, and Mr. Emerson's eyes twinkled. "I'm thankful the young scamps had the grace to use a fictitious name." It

was apparent that he, too, had read "The Children of the Abbey."

"I think I know who did it," he resumed. "It's a piece of revenge, and I don't much blame them."

The town-clerk took down the notice and made a move to tear it up.

"Let me have it," said Mr. Emerson, and he stowed it carefully away in his breast-pocket.

At noon the congregation learned that they had been hoaxed—that the publishment was spurious —that Amanda Matilda Mortimer was a myth, and great was their rage.

The boys stood ready, caps in hand, and as the final "amen" dropped from the pastor's lips, they slipped from the "nigger pew," and were out of the meeting-house and away before any other of the congregation had fairly reached the vestibule. And it was well understood who were the rogues; their final act had betrayed them; it was not that of innocents.

"Ain't published, eh?" asked Deacon Hart, striving in vain to comprehend; and when the iniquitous joke did dawn upon him, adding, "Well, well! them boys ought'er be dealt pooty severely with." With which opinion a majority of the congregation agreed.

When Mr. Park reached home he looked up Ned. He found him leaning idly against the barn door, thoughtfully kicking the snow with his foot. He was wondering how his father and mother

would view the joke, and was not at all startled when he heard his father's voice say, "Ned, come to my room; I wish to speak with you."

He obeyed, not with any great alacrity, and on arriving found his father already seated at the table where he transacted business as justice of the peace. Ned did not feel at liberty to sit down, as he would ordinarily have done, and so stood as a culprit might who was awaiting his sentence.

"Is this true that I hear, Ned?" his father began—"that you could so far forget all decency as to stick up a publishment of Mr. Emerson to—to—" hesitating at the lady's name.

"Amanda Matilda Mortimer," suggested Ned, a gleam of fun stealing out of the corner of either eye, in spite of himself.

But his father was not to be softened by a comic view of the affair. His face grew stern as he noticed that gleam of fun.

(Mr. Park had left the meeting-house so promptly that he had only learned that the publishment was a hoax. He had not learned that Amanda Matilda Mortimer was a myth.)

"It may seem fun to you, sir," he said; "but it seems to me you are getting too old for such tricks, and ought to have manliness enough to be done with them." This last thrust hurt Ned.

"It's no worse than Mr. Emerson does himself!" he burst out. "'Tain't so bad. The other day I spelt *isosceles* with two o's, an' he said there *was* a

word spelt with two o's that just described me, an' nobody's going t' call me a fool 'f I can help it—not even Piggy."

"Ned, how often have I told you that whatever nickname you boys may choose to give Mr. Emerson, it's not to be repeated in my presence. In my day, a boy who did such a thing would have got a sound flogging, and served him right."

Ned muttered something in reply.

"What's that you say?" asked his father.

"I'm glad I didn't live in those days, then."

"And how do you think your mother feels about it?" his father resumed. "I should think you might have a little regard for her feelings, if your own sense of what is right and decent is no restraint."

This was a still harder thrust, for Ned had a boy's chivalrous feeling for his mother. She was the true Madonna of his youthful worship; and although he might try her sorely at times, none knew better than he how the thought of her—of what she might think and feel—had kept him back from many a scrape. He felt that the scrapes he hadn't got into just on account of his consideration for his mother far outnumbered those he had. He did not say anything for a moment.

"Well, I wish I hadn't done it, for mother's sake," he said at last, "but I don't care a darn for Mr. Emerson. I tell you, father, you don't know anything about it—the way he's knocked us boys

round lately. He's as savage as a bear. An' I wish he was one, an' could be caged." This last sentence *sotto voce*.

"Well, Ned," replied his father, soothingly, "you know Mr. Emerson is a great sufferer, and allowances must be made. At the same time, he's a first-class teacher. He'll put you through and fit you well for Harvard, and few country school-teachers can do that. And you've got to learn to put up with things. A little knocking round won't hurt you: it'll do you good.

"But that isn't the question. I must say I am truly grieved that a son of mine could do what you have done to-day. Had it been on a week-day, or in any other place, it would not seem so bad. But to forget all the proprieties of time and place—"As to Mr. Emerson and Miss—Miss—"

"Amanda Matilda Mortimer," put in Ned again, and he smiled. He could not help it, as he recalled the combination over which he and Johnny had labored so successfully.

"As to Mr. Emerson and this Miss Mortimer, how do you think they must feel?"

"Why, father," exclaimed Ned, "there's no such person as Amanda Matilda Mortimer!"

"No such person!—no such person!" repeated the bewildered Mr. Park.

"Why no! she's only a name—Amanda Malvina Fitzwilliams, don't y' know? an' Lord Mortimer, in 'Th' Children of the Abbey.'"

"No, I don't know," replied Mr. Park, somewhat ruffled at his blunder, but at the same time greatly relieved. "I never read that delightful romance. *My* father didn't allow me to read novels." Which statement was strictly true, though Uncle Harry had long since got bravely over the interdiction, as Ned knew. He was a great lover of the Waverley Novels — as great a lover of "Ivanhoe" as Ned himself—and had sat up till three o'clock one night to finish it, after his return from that trip to Plymouth alluded to in an earlier chapter of this story, about the time of the tournament. But Ned discreetly kept silence.

"Well, that doesn't make it so bad—not quite. I'm glad you had the decency to use a fictitious name. Mr. Emerson can settle with you as he likes; I sha'n't interfere," he concluded. "Now I think you had better go to your room until dinner-time."

Dinner was served at the tavern at four o'clock on Sundays, and Ned had a long interval for reflection. About an hour before dinner there was a gentle knock at his door and his mother entered. The interview may be safely left to your imagination.

If our two boys expected a burst of wrath on the part of Mr. Emerson they were disappointed. Mr. Emerson was a man of surprises. He never did exactly what you expected he was going to do. After a season of irritability and petulance,

just when appearances indicated nothing less than a perfect cyclone of angry passion, a gleam of humor like a ray of sunlight would pierce the clouds, the clouds would scatter and disappear, and a calm ensue as serene as the blue depths of a June sky.

So it was in this instance. The boys had had a hard time with Mr. Emerson, and he knew it. As was stated in the beginning of this chapter, the demon of dyspepsia had held full possession of him, and he had been merciless. And although, as he said to Mr. Park, when they talked the matter over a few days later, the outrageous hoax might be laid at the door of the "general cussedness of boys," in his heart he did not blame these two. He really had a profound sympathy for boyhood; he could easily put himself in a boy's place.

So as he went home on that Sunday, with the spurious publishment stowed away in his breast-pocket, he was in a more amiable frame of mind than he had been for weeks. As he sat in his comfortable library, he pulled out the bit of paper, smoothed it, and read it anew. He smiled a little, and then fell into a reverie. How many years ago was it that Amanda Malvina Fitzwilliams was his boyish ideal of a lovely woman? Twenty years?—thirty years? He was a yellow-haired laddie then, studying Greek and Latin, and consoling himself for the hours spent over those tough mental gymnastics with "The Children of the Abbey," "The Mysteries of Udolpho," and "Evelina." This last,

he remembered, he did not like so well as the other two. It was vastly entertaining, but it was not so full of delightful mystery, not so poetic, perhaps.

How that dreamy, poetry-loving little laddie had changed with the years! But had he changed so much, after all? He had crusted over, so to speak. Contact with the world, the tussle which comes sooner or later with principalities and powers, had hardened him outwardly. But, as he mused, the man of forty felt that there was a good deal of the yellow-haired laddie left in him yet. Why couldn't he bring it out more? Why couldn't he let his boys see—he called them *his* boys, this childless man!—why could he not let them see that his youth was as truly a part of himself as his graver middle life? that, in fact, of every true life childhood and youth are as much a part as middle life and old age. It is youth that is immortal, perennial—constantly renewing itself as one grows in years, taking deeper root, bearing richer fruit, but still immortal *youth.*

Wasn't this a blessed truth to teach his boys? Should he not let them know it was a truth by showing them that he could sympathize with them on all sides—could see their possibilities as well as their faults?

He went to the book-shelves and took down from an obscure corner the three dingy leather-bound volumes of "The Children of the Abbey." It was years since he had looked into them. He

dusted them tenderly with his pocket-handkerchief, and began to turn over the yellow leaves. He fell into another reverie, which lasted till twilight stole in, filling the room with its soft memory-haunted shadows. Then he aroused himself briskly, replaced the books, and betook himself to his mother's sitting-room.

Well, after all, Ned and Johnny had done no great harm; they had only given him a few hours of pleasant retrospection; and he went to school the next morning in the most amiable of tempers, and it remained with him through the day. Ned's manly apology was graciously received, and a few kind, sympathetic words in reply did more to secure Ned's loyalty than years of the smoothest intercourse could have done.

At the close of the afternoon session he invited the whole school to a candy-pull that evening in his big kitchen, where they were received and delightfully entertained by the quaint little old lady in her bizarre dress, whose acquaintance we have already made at the Thanksgiving dinner at the tavern.

"I don't know whether I'm sorry or not I stuck up that publishment," said Ned to Dolly, as they were returning home from the candy-pull, blissful and sticky. "If 't hadn't been f' that we shouldn't have had this candy-pull to-night, I'll bet. Queer, ain't it? Everybody said Mr. Emerson 'd be as mad 's fire. But I b'lieve I never liked him half

as well 's I do this minute. Anyway, I don't b'lieve I'll ever try to plague him again."

As to whether he ever did or did not, let each boy judge for himself. Human nature is weak, and, to quote from Thankful, "dretful human."

CHAPTER XVII.

YARROW.

THE days lengthened, the cold strengthened, in accordance with the proverb, and one late February day Dolly was standing at dusk by the sitting-room window, looking out upon what was visible of the wintry landscape through the snow that was falling silently and in great flakes. She was looking out upon the spot where Gaston lay, thinking about him, as she often did. One hand held back the window drapery, while the other hung listlessly by her side.

Presently, into the hand hanging by her side, a cold, dewy nose was thrust. She turned quickly, and there in the uncertain firelight stood a dog with head uplifted, his wistful eyes seeking hers, and his magnificent tail waving slowly to and fro. A very ghost of a dog he seemed to Dolly's first, startled glance, but a second thrust of the cool, dewy nose proved him to be, without question, a substantial creature.

He was a stranger. Dolly had never before seen him, or any dog like him. He was entirely unlike the huge, broad-muzzled, tawny Gaston. This dog

had thin flanks and a sharp muzzle, with a tan spot under either eye.

"Who are you, and where did you come from?" she asked, as she might of a human being; and the dog answered with a whine, still moving his tail to and fro friendlily.

Dolly dropped the curtain and walked forward to the fire, the dog following. She lay down upon the hearth-rug, a favorite place and position with her, and he lay down, too, beside her, giving a sigh of content as he did so, and with his paws and head resting on the edge of her gown. Tucked under his collar she espied a note tied with a blue ribbon, and directed to "Mistress Dorothea."

"I wonder," she said, untying the blue ribbon, "do you come from the same place as Skatta."

As she opened the note a sprig of something dropped, which a label attached to it said was white heather, and brought good-luck. There were also some verses purporting to be

"*AN ADDRESS TO MISTRESS DOLLY, FROM HER FAITHFUL COLLIE.*

"I've crossed the blue Atlantic wave,
I've come from distant Yarrow,
Where poets sing of birken shades
And tell a tale of sorrow.

"From where the blissful skylark sings,
Upspringing from the heather,
While the proud eagle, soaring high,
Sees Yarrow flow beneath her.

"There blooms the yellow gowan still,
And there the rabbits burrow:
Green are the holms as when was sung
The bonny Braes of Yarrow.

"The swan on fair St. Mary's lake
Still floats—as sweet and rare, O,
The apple frae the rock hangs low
Above the flowing Yarrow.

"Sad, sad the day they led me frae
Those bonny Braes of Yarrow!
But if you'll love me, sweet, ah soon
Will flee all dule and sorrow!

"Fair art thou as the 'bonnie bride,'
The poet's 'winsome marrow!'
And I? A faithful collie I!
My name? My name is—Yarrow!"

The door opened, a curly head was thrust in, and "Do you like him, Dolly?" asked Ned.

"Oh, Ned, is that you? Come in and tell me all about him!" and Ned entered, followed by Cousin Kitty. "Where did he come from? and who sent him? Ah, Cousin Kitty, it was you!" catching sight of Cousin Kitty's smiling, conscious face. "I couldn't bear to have had him if he had looked one bit like Gaston, but he doesn't. Nobody can take Gaston's place," said the loyal Dolly, speaking of Gaston in the way she always thought of him, as a real person.

"I meant to have got him along for New-year's,

but I couldn't," said Cousin Kitty. "He had a sorry time getting across. The vessel was almost three months."

"And did he really come across the — the" — consulting the slip of paper in her hand—"'the blue Atlantic wave?'"

"Really and truly," was the reply.

"And where is Yarrow?" continued Dolly.

"If I'm to be catechised I may as well sit down, too," said Cousin Kitty, taking possession of a section of the rug, while Ned leaned against the mantle-piece, and looked down upon them in true masculine fashion.

"Yarrow is a small river in the south of Scotland, not much in itself, but made famous by the poets."

"Oh yes, I see!" and Dolly consulted her slip of paper again.

"Where poets sing of birken shades,
And tell a tale of sorrow."

"Now, what are 'birken shades?' and what 'tale of sorrow' did the poets tell?"

"Well, my dear, 'birken shades,' turned into Yankee prose, are birch-trees; and as to the 'tale of sorrow,' there are some lovely old ballads that will make your hair stand on end to read, written in the fifteenth century, called 'Rare Willie drowned in Yarrow,' and 'The Dowie Dens of Yarrow,' and two in the eighteenth, and one is called 'A Song,' and a grewsome song it is, too."

"Well," rejoined Dolly, running her eye down the verses, "I think I know how the English skylark sings, and what heather is. Oh, thank you for this, Cousin Kitty!" and she held up the sprig of white heather. "And does it really mean 'good-luck?'"

"Yes; if you should ever visit the Scottish Highlands as a guest, your host will probably present you with a sprig of white heather the first thing."

"And I know that the gowan is a daisy," Dolly went on, "but I don't think I know what holms are."

"Something like green meadows," replied Cousin Kitty; "and there's always a 'brae' in a Scotch song."

"Same's there is in a donkey," put in Ned, who began to feel that he was not getting his due share of this conversation.

"'*The swan on fair St. Mary's lake*
Still floats,'"

read Dolly, ignoring Ned's vile pun. "Whose swan was it? and why is he always floating?"

"It's Wordsworth's swan, and he's likely to go floating down the river of time forever and a day," laughed Cousin Kitty. "And as for the 'apple sweet and rare, O'—I had a fearful time making that rhyme, Dotty—one of those deliciously dismal old ballads has a good deal to say about the apple that 'hangs frae the rock.'"

"And what's a 'marrow?' I don't know as I like to be called a 'marrow.'" This was said doubtfully, Dolly's chief association with that word being a marrow squash.

"Oh, Dotty, Dotty, just listen to this!" and Cousin Kitty sang,

"'*Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride!*
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride,
And think nae mair of the Braes of Yarrow.'

"'Marrow' means (in Scotch, mind you, my dear) one of a pair; it means somebody very dear and sweet, and that's what you are, Dotty." And seizing her in her arms, Cousin Kitty lost her balance, and together they rolled over Yarrow, who jumped up, looking his surprise at this specimen of American manners.

"There! and now that you've had the verses annotated by the author, just put 'em away and look at doggie himself. Isn't he a beauty? And to name him 'Yarrow' was *such* a happy thought!" And Cousin Kitty sat up on the rug, and gathered up her hair from which her comb had fallen.

"These verses I shall always keep," remarked Dolly, folding them up carefully. "I wish I could write verses."

"P'r'aps you will some time. P'r'aps you'll be the great American poetess Mr. Emerson says is coming," said Ned, consolingly.

So Dolly put the verses away, and neither she nor Cousin Kitty nor Ned ever dreamed that some day they would be printed as a part of their veracious history.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW ULYSSES LOST AND FOUND HIS PENELOPE.

"AND now I think I'll go and show him to Thankful," said Dolly, after they had talked a little more, and Ned had learned that "Busk ye" means "prepare," "get ready;" and as she got up from the hearth-rug Yarrow executed his first circling dance around his new mistress.

There was not a guest in the house, and the rising wind which began to moan and shriek around the north-east gables, and the thickening snow, were prophecies of a quiet evening within. For any chance wayfarer would be likely to put up for the night at some hospitable farm-house, rather than to push on to the tavern through the storm and darkness.

Dolly and Ned, followed by Yarrow, ran into the kitchen, while Cousin Kitty, who had an eye for the picturesque, stopped a moment in the open door to take in the whole cosey interior, with the pair sitting on either side of the fireplace. It was that hour when there always seemed to be a pause in the rush and hurry of the day; the hour when, the chores being in progress outside, and the sup-

per well under way inside, there was nothing to do but to wait with knitting or sewing in hand, or even with folded hands, if one chose. It was the one brief daily interval of leisure in that busy household.

Between these two women sitting in the firelight and talking quietly together there was a marked contrast. Between the Little Madam, with her tiny, graceful figure, clad in her gown of soft white woollen, with her nun's coif bringing out by contrast the velvety blackness of her eyes, sitting by her flax-wheel diligently spinning like another Penelope, and Thankful, tall and angular, her dark gown of print, though scrupulously neat, without finish of lace or linen, her hair twisted in a defiant knot on top of her head, sitting bolt upright in the straightest of straight-backed chairs, and knitting for dear life on a pair of stout blue stockings—between these two the distance seemed wide indeed.

But in reality they were the warmest and closest of friends, and always had a great deal to say to each other. Perhaps because they were both lonely and in some sense apart from others. For Thankful, despite her unattractive exterior and porcupinish temper, had a history, having, like most of us, once possessed a youth—a youth of sunny hopes, with eyes as bright as any that read these pages. During that glad spring-time she had —following the traditions of both Old and New England — spun and woven a chestful of house-

hold linen; and when Cyrus Hatton should return from the last voyage he intended to make to the East Indies it was understood they were to be married. But Cyrus never came back; his ship, from the time she left Hong-Kong, was never heard from. She went down, doubtless, with all on board, in some fierce typhoon; and with the lapse of time the chest of household linen had grown yellow, and the rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed girl had merged into the angular, crotchety, but withal tender-hearted woman with whom we have become partially acquainted in the progress of this story.

For all helpless creatures she had an almost infinite compassion, and to this feeling the Little Madam appealed strongly. For who could be more helpless than she, living in a sort of twilight with the past a blank?

Thankful often said she was "loony," which adjective puzzled Cousin Kitty.

"What does she mean, Auntie?" she asked Mrs. Park one day.

"Country people say, 'crazy as a loon,' you know," replied Mrs. Park, "and loony is the adjective of loon, I suppose."

"Pshaw!" said Cousin Kitty, "that's begging the question, Auntie. Why is a loon crazier than a coot, or any other sea-fowl, I beg to know?"

And Mrs. Park said, "I'm sure I don't know," absently. She was just then looking over flan-

nels, with a view to making warm petticoats for the McLouds, and was more interested in that just then than in the derivation of "loony."

But Cousin Kitty pondered the question.

"I have it!" she exclaimed at last. "'Tisn't from loon at all. Loon, used in that sense, is only the corruption of Luna. Dialects are full of such corruptions. Luna—the moon—is said to take away people's senses, you know, especially when they sleep in the moonlight, and that's where Thankful gets her 'loony,' d'ye see, Auntie?" And Cousin Kitty felt all the pride of a discoverer in the realm of language, and Mrs. Park said, absently, "It's very likely." She was still considering the subject of the warm flannel petticoats.

The fireside *tête-à-tête* was broken up by the entrance of Ned and Dolly, followed by Yarrow. Neither Thankful nor the Little Madam had seen the latter, as on his arrival by stage he had been conveyed directly to Cousin Kitty's room. He was duly admired and praised, to which praise and admiration he responded in true doggish fashion by prancing, cocking his silken ears, and waving his superb tail. He took to the Little Madam at once, as was to be expected, and Thankful secured his undying affection by giving him a huge lump of brown sugar. Having thus been cordially received into the bosom of the family, he stretched himself on the rug near the settle, in the warmest corner of the kitchen.

The chores were finished, supper was eaten, and the dishes washed, but instead of going into the sitting-room for an evening of reading and games, the three lingered in the kitchen. The hearth was swept up, a fresh relay of wood piled upon the iron dogs, and 'Zekle settled himself in one corner of the fireplace for his after-supper smoke. Tobacco-smoke was offensive to Thankful, so he always contrived to sit so the smoke from his pipe should pass off up the chimney.

Not long ago I read in the life of the distinguished Thomas Carlyle that he used to smoke in that way because tobacco-smoke gave Mrs. Carlyle a headache; and I suspect a good many smokers have found out that way to be rid of the dead odors of tobacco—those smokers, I mean, who are so fortunate as to have an open fireplace by which to smoke.

"Let's blow soap-bubbles a while," suggested Cousin Kitty. "That is, if Thankful will let us," she added, smiling upon the autocrat of the kitchen.

Thankful graciously assented, and she herself brought out the huge yellow mince-meat bowl in which to make the suds. Fresh clay pipes with which to blow the bubbles were to be had in abundance; for Thankful was always breaking 'Zekle's pipes—accidentally, of course—by knocking them off the mantle-piece or the jamb by the oven, where he always left them "clus t' th' edge," as

she said. Whether broken accidentally or not, 'Zekle took the precaution to have a good store on hand, lest some night, thinking to take his usual smoke, he might find himself pipeless, and nothing for it but to pull on his boots again and tramp over to "Jacob's" for a pipe or go without. Out of this store he presented to each of the three a long pipe of purest white.

Presently the kitchen was gay with prismatic bubbles. They floated in the draught towards the fireplace; they rose up to the ceiling, breaking against its smoky surface. Yarrow, after watching them a while, seized one, and gave a whine of disappointment as it vanished in his grasp. Up and down the kitchen flew the three soap-bubble blowers, laughing and breathless, trying to see how many bubbles they could keep afloat at a time. 'Zekle watched the fun with a broad smile, Thankful's countenance relaxed over her knitting, and the Little Madam drew her wheel near the table whereon stood the bowl, so as to be in the thick of the sport. Only the Persian cat looked on with grave indifference. He had seen too much of life to be taken in by a soap-bubble. He fell asleep, and dreamed of mice and other substantial things.

The storm without increased in violence. Occasionally a strong blast swept down the chimney, sending tongues of flame out into the room. The gathering snow upon the windows crept up to the middle of the sash. The cow-boy coming in from

the barn, whither he had been to give the cows their nightcap of sweet rowan, "guessed there'd be some diggin' t' do in the mornin'," and, taking his candle, went off to bed in the open chamber over the wood-room, where the snow already lay in little drifts upon the floor.

Still the mad romp went on, still the rainbow-hued bubbles floated up and burst, while merry shouts within alternated with wild storm-bursts without.

Presently, in a lull of both storm and merriment, a faint jingling of sleigh-bells was heard. They ceased just under the kitchen windows; they ceased in a confused jangle, as though the horse wearing them had fallen in the deep snow.

"I vum 'f there ain't a traveller! Must be druv t' be out 'n this weather." And 'Zekle, laying aside his pipe, took down the lantern and proceeded to light the candle. This proved to be a work of time. The lighter of fat pine first refused to burn, and then the candle-wick proved obstinate.

"That's b'cause you alwa's will pinch it out with y'r fingers," said Thankful, alluding to 'Zekle's habit of wetting his fingers in his mouth before pinching out the snuff of the blown-out candle.

Meanwhile a renewed jangling of bells indicated that the horse was scrambling up. No one, however, except 'Zekle and Thankful, paid any heed to the sound. Dolly had just succeeded in blowing

an enormous bubble, and a fresh chase ensued around the kitchen.

Having at last lighted the candle, 'Zekle shut the old tin lantern and went out. It was a queer old lantern, with holes punched in the tin to let out the light, such as may be found to-day in country garrets, if indeed they may not still be in use in primitive districts.

The big bubble finally burst, and the blowers were standing around the bowl beginning anew, when the door opened, and 'Zekle came in with the traveller, who looked more like the popular conception of Santa Claus than anything else. He was clad in fur from top to toe, to every hair of which, apparently, a snow-flake clung. He advanced to the fire, took his stand upon the broad hearth, and shook himself like a Newfoundland dog, sending a shower of snow into the corner of the settle where lay the Persian cat, that awoke spitting.

The three standing around the yellow bowl dipped in their pipes, giving no heed at first to this by-play, for guests came as naturally to the old tavern as did the days and nights. But just as they were about to send off simultaneously three superb bubbles, their attention was distracted by the Little Madam.

She had risen from her wheel, and was standing with parted lips, gazing with all her soul in her eyes. As has been said before somewhere in the

course of this story, and perhaps it has been said more than once, her eyes ordinarily had a bewildered, questioning look. She seemed to grope continually in the past. This expression was now intensified, as though something had struck with extraordinary force one of the always vibrating chords of her memory. One would have said that she was about to grasp a definite recollection.

Dolly and Ned, standing on either side of Cousin Kitty, grasped each an arm without speaking, and the eyes of the three followed hers and rested upon the stranger. He had drawn off his driving-gloves, and was now leisurely laying aside his long fur cloak. As he did so, he talked with 'Zekle, who was asking questions about the storm and the state of the roads. He spoke English with a foreign accent. He was tall and slight, and his hands, which he held to the fire for a moment, were small, muscular, and patrician. At last he took off his fur cap, which, drawn closely down, had entirely hidden his face with the exception of a drooping mustache, which fell over his mouth and was heavy with frost.

He then turned to greet the other inmates of the kitchen. As he did so his eyes fell on the Little Madam, who had now advanced into the middle of the room, still gazing fixedly at him.

For a brief second — an eternity it seemed to those who stood by — the two looked at each other. Over the countenance of the stranger passed an ex-

pression of intense astonishment, of incredulity, of recognition, of joy, one quickly following the other. He, too, stepped forward into the room.

"Anita!" he said, holding out his arms, and with a cry of supernal gladness the Little Madam flew to their shelter.

In that supreme moment three more of 'Zekle's pipes, dropping from nerveless hands, fell to the floor in irremediable smash, while Yarrow, springing to his feet, gazed doubtfully at the pair, not being able to decide whether he ought to fly at the stranger's throat, or circle about them in a welcoming dance.

Over the little figure lying motionless in his arms the stranger murmured a few words in a strange tongue, but there was no response. The recognition, that one glimpse into the closed past, had been too much for the frail little woman. She lay upon his arm with closed eyes, pale and sweet as an Easter lily.

"Is she dead?" he asked, fearfully.

"No," replied Thankful, recovering her scattered senses, which had been quite knocked out of her by this astonishing scene. She advanced promptly, reaching down, in passing, the "camphire" and opodeldoc bottles from the cupboard over the mantle-piece. "She's only fainted; fetch her right in here." And she led the way to Mrs. Park's private sitting-room.

That good lady was not a little surprised at the

sight of this unexpected and singular procession. 'Zekle still carried the old tin lantern in his hand, and Dolly and Ned followed closely in the rear in a state of fearful yet delightful expectancy. They scented afar off the coming story.

"Now we shall know all about it," Ned ventured to whisper to Dolly, as they stood back from the sofa whereon lay the Little Madam. "Who d'y' bet he is, anyhow?"

"Oh, don't, Ned," said Dolly, tearfully. "P'r'aps she's dead."

"No she isn't," was Ned's sturdy reply. "Didn't you ever see anybody faint before? Jerushy Potts fainted away once in meeting-time, an' fell an' hit her head an awful crack on the cricket, an' didn't know it—kept right on fainting. Oh, she'll come out all right. But, I say, I hope he'll tell pretty quick who he is, an' who she is, an' how she come in that boat an' don't know anything. Don't you, Dolly?"

"Ye-es," Dolly replied, still doubtful, but inclining to the indulgence of a little curiosity. "But see—her eyes are open!"

Yes, her eyes were open, and they were moving from one to another of the anxious faces about her, and each one saw in them a clear intelligence. After all these years of mental wanderings, the Little Madam had come to herself once more.

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated Thankful, in a choked voice. "The dear soul 's all right."

And the opodeldoc poured in a stream from the bottle, which, in her agitation, she held at an unsafe angle. But nobody noticed it. Other eyes besides hers were dim, and Ned caught himself sniffing, to his great disgust. He winked hard, however, and fixed his eyes on Anita. He wasn't going to break down if he could help it. It was well enough for Dolly to be wiping her eyes with her handkerchief—*she* was a girl; but boys were made of different stuff.

Anita, as we may now call her, tried to rise from the sofa. "No, my dear, you had better rest a while," said Mrs. Park. She lay quietly for a few moments, with her eyes fixed upon her new-found friend. Her nun's coif had fallen off, and her rippling black hair lay in great waves of luminous darkness about her. The two talked together for a few moments in their own tongue, while Dolly and Ned were consumed with curiosity. Then she turned to Mrs. Park.

"Luis will tell you all about me," she said. "I remember now, but Luis will tell you."

And Luis did tell—how he and Anita grew up together in one of those sunny islands that lie midway between North and South America, where grow the orange and lemon and banana, and other luscious tropical fruits, where the jewelled humming-bird builds in bowers of orchids and hanging ferns, and the cicada strikes together his big black wings till they resound like a blacksmith's anvil.

(I am not telling you this just in the order in which Luis told it; that would be impossible. For right in the middle of a sentence, perhaps, he would turn to Anita and say something in their own tongue, and she, seeing Dolly's and Ned's curiosity, would ask him to repeat to them what he had told her. So, as you see, my telling of it must necessarily be mixed. What he said to her was concerning some incidents of their childhood, in this way wisely and gently trying to strengthen her returning memory. And as she listened to these, the light of happiness deepened in her eyes, and so lovely a color stole into her cheeks that Cousin Kitty could not refrain from whispering to Aunt Anna, "Our pale lily is fast turning into a blush rose." Most of his talk was addressed to Mrs. Park.)

Their fathers' estates joined, and were in the suburbs of a populous little city, the estates themselves running far back into the hills, with sugar plantations and coffee plantations. Luis and Anita used to wander up among those hills into the tangle of woods where lived the Imperial parrot, with its plumage of royal purple and green. "And do you remember, my Anita, the day we found the humming-bird on her nest, and sat down to watch her, and her little mate flew at my eyes, and we could not drive him quite away even with a stick, but he would perch on a twig near by, and every time we stirred so much as a finger he flew

at us—the furious atom! and how his mate came down from her nest and soothed his ruffled temper with her coaxings.

"And there was the time we went with Henrique to get the wild bees' honey, and Henrique climbed up the tree—two hundred feet high it was, dear madam; you have none such in New England. He walked up on the strong vines of the parasites that covered its trunk, and he smoked out the bees, and sent us down great flakes of honey in his pannier, and the amber sirup he poured into the spathes of the mountain-palm — like your pea-pods, madam, only bigger, five feet long—and one of the spathes upset, my Anita, do you remember? and spilt the honey all over your head and your pretty dress, and how Dolores—"

"Ah, Dolores, my poor Dolores!" interrupted Anita, with a cry of pain. "She is no more alive —the dreadful earthquake!" and a shudder passed over her.

"No, no, my Anita, Dolores lives. She lives to welcome Anita. *She* is not dead."

Dolores was Anita's old black nurse, he explained.

The houses of these two families, it seems, were close by the sea, the lovely tropical sea—the treacherous sea, which woos with its beauty and then destroys. But this they—the two children—did not know. They only knew that it was beautiful with its varying tints of amethyst and pearl and heav-

enly sapphire, and they played and swam in its waters.

So these two grew up together till they were seventeen, when Luis was sent to Cuba on business for his father — something about the coffee plantations and sugar plantations. And while he was away an earthquake visited this lovely and tranquil island, a fearful earthquake, and in an instant a part of the populous city, with the homes wherein dwelt the families of Luis and Anita, sunk without warning, and the sea, the lovely, treacherous, tropical sea, rolled over them.

That was what Luis found when he returned. Not a trace of those two happy homes, only the dimpling, sparkling, babbling sea. He inquired among the survivors from the earthquake if none of those whom he loved had escaped. "Not one," was the answer. And so he came away, for he could not stay on that now desolate island—came to New York, where his father had had business relations with a certain house, and there he had remained, working diligently, and accumulating much money for — nobody, he had thought, but now—and he looked at Anita.

And how did he chance to arrive here, at Park's Tavern, on this stormy night? He was on his way to visit a friend of the business house living in New Bedford—on the way from Boston, by way of Bridgewater, through which town he had gone to take a friend. And somehow in the blinding

storm he had missed his way, and chance had brought him here to find his Anita, as one risen from the dead. Chance?—he corrected himself reverently. Evidently he thought, with the old dramatist,

"*Eternal God that chance did guide.*"

Much to Ned's and Dolly's disappointment, he paused here. He had not yet explained the, to them, vital point. How came the Little Madam to be floating in mid-ocean when Skipper Joe picked her up? That was what they wanted to know. And Anita, with her keen perceptions, divined their wish. *That* she only could explain; Luis knew nothing of that.

She remembered, she said, one morning after Luis had gone, taking out their little boat for a row around the island to a favorite flower-lined cove. Terrified by the sudden earthquake, she tried to return, and must have rowed near the spot where their old homes had sunk. The unfamiliar shore must have bewildered her. She remembered rowing hither and thither, seeking in vain for her lost home. And then her senses must have fled, and the winds and waves carried her where they pleased.

It was late when Luis finished his narrative, and Aunt Anna at once ordered Ned and Dolly off to bed, though Dolly never looked wider awake, and

Ned protested he wasn't one bit sleepy, and didn't feel as if he ever should be again.

Cousin Kitty, the last to leave the room, re-opened the door after saying "Good-night," and put back her head.

"So Ulysses has found his Penelope, after all, Auntie," she said.

"As we hoped," was the smiling reply.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WEDDING.

IT was on a Monday afternoon in early March. The stage that day had left at the tavern three big trunks, around which were grouped in Anita's room the whole feminine portion of the household. These trunks had been opened, and part of the contents lay upon the floor, looking as though, having been relieved from the pressure of the covers, they had boiled over. Above these shining masses of color Anita hovered like a humming-bird over a bed of honey-laden flowers. This was her *trousseau*, forwarded by Luis from New York. She made a rapid little plunge on this side, a deft little plunge on that, bringing up each time a drop of sweets in the shape of a silk of pale blue, a ribbon of pale pink, or a velvet of lavender — those delicate old-fashioned tints of which we seem to have lost sight in our present carnival of color.

"What lovely, lovely lace!" exclaimed Cousin Kitty, lifting from its box the wedding-veil itself. "It's worth its weight in—diamond-dust! I don't believe the Empress of all the Russias has finer. The Señor Gonsalva must have a mint of money."

Just then Anita came up from one of her dives

with a jewel-casket, which, on being opened, displayed such an array of brilliant gems lying in their velvet beds as almost struck the beholders dumb. Not quite, however.

"Oh, what are those?" asked Dolly, hanging over a set of opals, in the hearts of which a spark of emerald and ruby flamed like imprisoned fire. "And oh what splendid, *splendid* rubies!" Speech could go no farther, and she contemplated in rapt silence a diamond cross that sparkled and flashed like distant suns. Of a truth, as Cousin Kitty said, the Señor Gonsalva must have a mint of money.

"P'r'aps he's got a diamond mine," Ned contrived to whisper in her ear.

From another of her sudden plunges Anita emerged with a package neatly folded and directed to "Miss Makepeace," the contents of which took that imperturbable lady quite by surprise. On being opened, there slipped from it a black satin dress pattern of wonderful texture—"thick as a board," was Thankful's own descriptive term for it whenever in after-years she talked of it, which was pretty often, as you may suppose.

Other surprises followed quickly on the discovery of the black satin, viz., an India shawl for Mrs. Park, which could *almost* be drawn through Anita's ruby bracelet, a pearl necklace, and a locket with her monogram in seed-pearls on the back, for Cousin Kitty, a similar one for Dolly, together with a dress pattern of creamy white satin embroidered

with rose-buds for the latter, and one of pale pink satin for the former. These were presented to the two in their character as bridesmaids, in which capacity they had consented to serve at the coming wedding, which was to take place about the middle of April.

Having found and presented these packages, Anita stood with clasped hands, wrinkling up her forehead, and apparently much puzzled and perplexed.

"Ah, my good Ned—" she began, when her countenance suddenly cleared. She made a plunge into what might be called the north-east corner of the biggest trunk—it was certainly as big as a moderate state-room on a Sound steamer, and could consistently claim an interest in the points of compass—and brought up therefrom a box, which she presented to Ned with an expression of happy triumph. It contained that one treasure so unspeakably dear to every boyish heart, viz., a watch—a gold watch, at that—a watch that would "go," which cannot be said with truth of every boy's watch—a watch, too, with his monogram in tiny diamonds on the back—and furthermore, a watch with a gold chain attached.

Ned, who had not been able to resist the temptation of being present at the opening of these trunks, which had excited much neighborly curiosity when lifted off the stage that day, but who up to that time had kept somewhat in the back-

ground, feeling that it wasn't quite consistent with manly dignity to exhibit too much interest in "clothes," now came forward, blushing with delight, and thanked Anita.

"It's—it's bu—," he stammered, coming, in his confusion, within a hair's-breadth of the contraband word, and then stopping himself and beginning anew. "He's a trump, an' it's no end kind of him; but I guess you told him to, Anita;" and Anita dimpled and laughed, and did not deny it. And with her own brown little hand she took the old watch from his pocket—a watch which he had to wind up four times a day to keep it going, setting it ahead one hour every time it was wound—and replaced it with the gold one, hooking the chain into his button-hole.

"Luis is royal in his gifts," said Cousin Kitty afterwards in a private interview with Aunt Anna. "But ought we to accept them?"

"Ordinarily I should say not," replied Aunt Anna, who was admiring the beauties of her India shawl. And then she laughed, adding, "But in the ordinary course of things such a question isn't often likely to arise. We may accept these, I think, in the spirit in which they are offered. It's a sort of song of praise on Luis's part, you see, the giving of these. It's his way of celebrating the finding of Anita—a pæan of thanksgiving."

"A kind of recitative, you might say," added Cousin Kitty, "with my pearl necklace for high G,

and your India shawl for low A. Well, I must say I'm not sorry that such is your decision, Auntie. For though I could have parted with these, if necessary"—looking from the pale pink satin in one hand to the pearl necklace in the other—"I'm very willing to keep them. But what a wedding it's going to be for the old tavern! and in what gorgeous raiment shall the bridesmaids shine, eh, Dotty?" and Dolly, who had been standing by, awaiting with no little anxiety Aunt Anna's decision, gave the creamy satin and the pearl necklace which she held in her arms a little hug of congratulation and possession. *Jubilate!* they were hers! and she for one was glad that the Señor Gonsalva's pæan of thanksgiving had taken the form it had.

But the opening of the trunks was only the beginning of the end. A busy six weeks ensued. The old tavern was turned topsy-turvy. "It beat the c'nventions," said 'Zekle.

In the kitchen the wedding-cake was made in relays, seven loaves at a time — twenty-eight great fruity loaves in all, with frosting, over which Thankful exhausted her utmost skill in decoration.

In Anita's sunny room, amid the fragrance of her mignonette and the continuous chattering of the white Australian cockatoo, the wedding-clothes were "created," to use Cousin Kitty's own word for it. At first there had been talk of summoning a distinguished dress-maker from Quincy to

preside over this department. She had made the gowns of the daughter of the Senator from that district for her *début* at Washington. But Cousin Kitty vetoed this proposition.

"Let Pella cut them," she said. "Her fits are perfect, and I can tell her all the rest. I've the greatest knack at those things, Auntie, and I should so like to create Penelope's wardrobe."

So Pella, the Byfield dress-maker, whose baptismal name was Experience, came, and Anita was turned into a dummy, and tried on gowns from morning till night, while the two cut and fitted, and pinched in here and let out there, and as each fresh gown was finished, it was hung in the bedroom opening off the dancing-hall, which had been devoted to this purpose, and thither the myriad of callers at the tavern—for news of all these wonderful happenings there had run like wildfire through the town—were taken to view them.

With only one exception they pronounced them the most wonderful array of gowns they had ever set eyes on. Mrs. Davis was that one exception. She had a fictitious friend somewhere—like Sairey Gamp's Mrs. Harris—named Matilda Price. This Matilda Price, according to Mrs. Davis, once had a gown that united in itself all the glories of Anita's whole wardrobe, hearing of which assertion unbelieving Byfield cried out with Betsy Prigg, "I don't believe there's no sich a person."

The bridesmaids' gowns being a sort of side is-

sue only, were to be made some time, and some time proving to be no time, it is a matter of no surprise that Pella sat up till three o'clock on the night preceding the wedding to finish them.

As to the wedding itself, a strictly private ceremony was talked of at first; but this intention becoming known, there arose such a howl of dissent and remonstrance through the length and breadth of Byfield that it was reconsidered. Anita said she would like to have all these people who had been so kind to her at her wedding, so three hundred invitations were issued, which comprised a large part of the inhabitants of the town, which numbered, all told, only about five hundred.

The ceremony was to take place in the dancing-hall, that being the biggest room in the house—the only one, in fact, into which three hundred guests could be comfortably put at one time. Indeed, if it had not been for this big hall, it is more than probable that these three hundred guests would not have been invited.

"And I wish we might have a wedding-bell," Cousin Kitty had remarked when they talked over the arrangements; "but that's past hoping for, I suppose." But on her explaining what she meant by a wedding-bell—a bell made of flowers, to ring down upon the bride after the ceremony — Ned said of course they could have one. "May-flowers enough in the woods t' make a dozen bells, Cousin Kitty."

The May-flower comes early in the land of the Pilgrims, coming often, as did the Pilgrim *May-flower* itself, "amidst the storms" and the frosts of a lingering winter. But this year spring came early. The heavy snow which had made the Señor Luis Gonsalva a willing prisoner for a week at the tavern, waiting for the roads to be broken out and made passable, had fled almost as quickly as it had come, before the melting power of the spring sun. Everywhere the grass was springing green in the last of March; the buds on the lilac-bushes at the south door of the tavern were swelling; and the tiger-lilies and none-so-pretties were showing above the brown soil. Bluebirds and robins had made their appearance, and Dolly and Ned were of the opinion that Nature herself was hastening to get on her bridal robes to do honor to the coming wedding. The old people said they "shouldn't wonder" if the grain were waving in the fields, and the apple-trees were pink with bloom, by the nineteenth of April, as they were on that famous day in 1775.

In this general and rapid advance of spring the May-flower was not a whit behind. The week before the wedding it was in its glory, and a score or two of boys and girls, enlisted by Ned, were rifling the woods and fields of this darling of bleak New England.

This was Dolly's first experience in May-flower gathering, but she soon learned where to seek for the shy beauties — under the moist pine-needles

and in the shadiest nooks for the pink ones, and in the open fields and wood borders for the white. With only a slight brush of the fingers over the loosely-lying, dry, brown oak-leaves what a wealth of beauty was laid bare!

They brought these by the armful to Cousin Kitty, who carefully placed them in shallow troughs of water in one of those grewsome bins in the cool, dark cellar, to keep until the morning of the wedding, when they should be woven by myriads of helping fingers into the bell of wire which 'Zekle himself had fashioned in the wood-room chamber. These were, indeed, new times for 'Zekle. He never expected to have been called upon "t' build a weddin'-bell," and after he had finished it, its use was a mystery to him. Betty's mother, who, as usual, had been called in with Betty to assist in this avalanche of work so suddenly precipitated into the old tavern, waggled her head over it as something foreign if not heathenish, and Mrs. Davis could find no parallel for it in the experience of Matilda Price; but Thankful was sure that anything originating with Cousin Kitty and approved by Mrs. Park for the pleasure of the Little Madam *must* be all right, to which irresistible logic Betty's mother at last gave up her doubts.

Luis arrived on the day but one preceding the wedding, and on the evening of the day before the wedding there arrived from Boston a renowned caterer, accompanied by six colored subordinates,

and any number of mysterious packages and baskets. The boys who were now hanging continuously about the tavern, envying Ned his superior opportunities, and most of whom were among the invited guests, managed to get a peep into the dining-room where these mysterious baskets were being unladened, and carried home wonderful accounts of what they had seen.

At last the day and the hour arrived, and the guests were assembled early in the hall, awaiting the entrance of the bridal party. At the upper end hung the wedding-bell, filling the room with its fragrance. Near by stood the minister, a grave and courtly gentleman of the old school, whose very presence was a benediction.

The names of the three hundred guests are among the annals of the past. It will be enough to say that almost every one whom you have met in the course of this story was there—all but bed-ridden Matty and poor palsy-stricken Patty. And yet, strange as it may seem to you, it is a question if among those three hundred there were any who rejoiced more heartily over the Little Madam's restoration to happiness than did these two helpless, hapless creatures, to whom so much of what is supposed to constitute happiness was denied.

In the corner farthest away from the place where the bridal party was to stand, the boys congregated in that gregarious way common to boys. They occasionally exchanged a remark in a hoarse

whisper, and now and then one would pinch his neighbor or tread on his toes, feeling safe from the danger of a retaliating blow.

The girls, on the contrary, had placed themselves as near the spot where the party was to stand as etiquette allowed, where they smiled and sparkled, and exchanged whispers, too; and Aunt Debby, looking up into that corner as she came in at the door near the lower end of the hall, said, "Bless 'em!" involuntarily and quite loud. She couldn't help it, they looked as though they were having a so thoroughly good time.

Nannie, who came in with Debby, wore her Marie Stuart lace cap — which Mrs. Park had given her for this very occasion—hind side before, and even Aunt Debby had failed to get on her somewhat dry and ancient "front" exactly straight; but her face beamed with good-will, and she shook all over in that jelly-like way fat people are apt to, as she exchanged smiles and greetings with each of the three hundred individually.

Mr. Emerson was there with his mother, who looked more bizarre in dress than usual, in a white satin, which she had disinterred from some one of those chests where she kept her relics of the past. It was extremely short, displaying a pair of thick blue woollen stockings and low shoes. Over her shoulders she wore a mantle of pea-green gauze, which was crossed in front and fastened behind in a sash-like drapery. As usual, she carried a bag,

this time of crimson beads with a purple fringe; and to her cap she had added a bunch of artificial flowers so preposterous in size and color that the merry girls in the corner came near going off into explosions of laughter at the sight of it, and were only restrained by their respect for her really admirable qualities.

But "what a pity," as Cousin Kitty said, "that so excellent a woman should make such a guy of herself!" Well, to be sure, we must not expect to find all the virtues and graces in one bundle.

There chanced to be two guests at this wedding whose presence would have graced any assembly in the land. The mother of the beautiful Emily Marshall had come down for a brief rest, after a brilliant social winter, to drink fresh milk and to recruit on plain country fare, and she had been bidden to the wedding. She was not "the rose," but she was the mother of the rose, and her elegant manners and fine personal presence added not a little to its *éclat*. The other guest was Daniel Webster. He was here only for a brief hour *en route*, but it was an assembly after his own heart, of kindly, plain, but intelligent country-folk, and he enjoyed it accordingly.

"Here they come!" whispered Johnny Tuttle, catching a glimpse of Ned through the open door, and thinking that even for that wonderful gold watch he wouldn't have been in his shoes just then.

For Dolly and Ned were the first to enter, Ned

looking very fine in his black velvet suit and scarlet necktie; and as to Dolly—well, the girls fairly devoured her with their eyes, and would have declared her "just too sweet for anything," if they had had the advantages of our modern manner of expressing ourselves. Both looked slightly conscious of the three hundred pairs of eyes, more or less, which were fastened upon them. It *was* something of an ordeal, it is true, but they acquitted themselves very well.

Cousin Kitty and the brown-eyed doctor followed directly, and then came—ah, everybody held their breath as the tall, dark, handsome man entered, leading his *petite* bride in bridal white, the filmy lace of her veil enveloping her like a silvery mist.

If the girls in the corner had dared, they would have given vent to their feelings in one prolonged, sighing "O—h!" As it was, they only breathed a little more deeply. And the boys ceased from their pinchings and punchings as the two stopped under the wedding-bell, and the minister came forward to his place in front of them.

The marriage-service is always brief—to the lookers-on—and it was soon over. One incident must not be forgotten. As Anita in her low, sweet voice began the formula, "I, Anita, take thee, Luis," a sob was heard—a queer sob, strangled in its birth apparently. It came from Thankful, who, feeling rather "shook," as she explained afterwards, with the events of the preceding weeks, had taken the

precaution to shelter herself behind Mr. Webster's ample proportions; but when, just at that point in the service, she saw Skipper Joe draw the back of his hand across his eyes, it entirely "upsot" her. She escaped from the hall at once, but recovered her equanimity in time to preside over the wedding-cake, arrayed in the glories of her new satin.

The congratulations followed the service—very informal congratulations, but very genuine. Out from their corner fluttered the girls like a covey of gay-plumaged birds, and kissed the bride, and hovered and cooed around her. And up from their corner came the boys in somewhat more awkward fashion, and shook hands shamefacedly with the Little Madam—for to them she would always be that. Then followed the never-to-be-forgotten banquet, with its pyramids of ice-cream—ice-cream was not the every-day thing it is now—its translucent jellies, and luscious fruits from those islands lying midway between North and South America; and last, but not least, its thick slices of wedding-cake, of which each boy ate his to the last crumb, while the girls just tasted theirs, and took the remnant home to dream over.

And so went the Little Madam forth from the shelter of the old tavern.

THE END.

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